

4 12

315848

WEST HILL PUBLIC LIBRARY, WANDSWORTH,
LONDON, S.W.18.

METROPOLITAN SPECIAL COLLECTION
METROPOLITAN JOINT FICTION RESERVE

THIS BOOK SHOULD BE RETURNED ON OR BEFORE THE DATE
STAMPED BELOW.

T.S./L.	1/51	L 5458	

T.S./L. 1/51 L 5458



YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

BY
MANNIN CRANE

WITH A FOREWORD BY
COMMODORE SIR BERTRAM F. HAYES, K.C.M.G., D.S.O.



HEATH CRANTON LIMITED
6 FLEET LANE LONDON E.C.4

1926

910.4

~~315848~~

M27198

To
THE MEMORY OF MY SHIPMATES
IN THEIR LAST LONG WATCH BELOW

The Seven Seas roll o'er them,
Beyond the reach of clime;
Ten thousand keels ride o'er them,
Their monument sublime.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

PREFACE

It is hoped that all who accompany us will spend many a pleasant "watch below" by the fire. If memories are stirred, if a smile comes, or if only a realization, however slight, of what the sea is to us—mistress, mother and heritage—then we voyage not in vain.

I wish to acknowledge the courtesy of, and tender my thanks to, the Editors of the undermentioned publications, who have kindly consented to the reproduction of much of the matter contained herein: *The Navy*, *The Nautical Magazine*, *The Cunard Magazine*, *The Mersey*, *The Elder Dempster Magazine*, *The Seven Seas Magazine*, *The Birmingham Sunday Mercury*, *The Liverpool Echo*, *The Liverpool Weekly Post*, *The Liverpool Weekly Courier*, *The Liverpool Daily Courier*, *The Liverpool Express* and many others.

I wish also to thank Mr. D. W. E. Gutman for the splendid wrapper sketch supplied by him, and Mr. I. P. Phillips for the delightful sketches appearing at the head of each chapter.

M.C.

FOREWORD

I HAVE been asked to write a Foreword for the book of short stories about the sea, and its superstitions and trials, which has been written by Mannin Crane, and is about to be published.

I do so with very much pleasure, as in my early days at sea I feel sure I must have been shipmates with some of the old sailor men he writes about—"Dan Crellin" for instance. They are so true to life, in those days, that if I have not sailed with the actual individuals he mentions, I have at any rate been shipmates with their counterparts.

I have also vivid recollections of being washed about the decks when wearing ship off Cape Horn just as he describes.

I feel sure that the stories will be of interest to the reading public as they tell of a side of life with which they are not so well acquainted as, in my opinion, they ought to be, and I wish the Author every success in his venture.

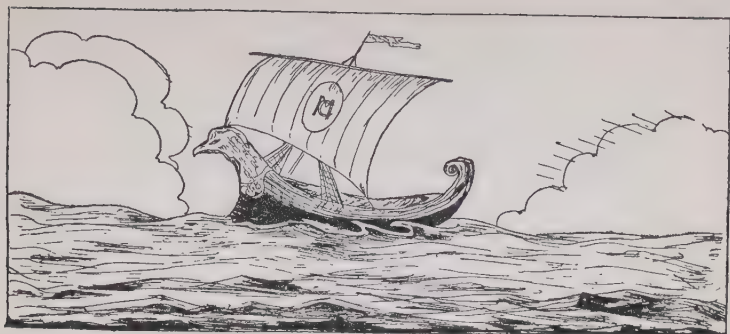
BERTRAM F. HAYES.

LIVERPOOL,
September, 1926.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE	7
FOREWORD	9
DAN CRELLIN	13
THE TRIDENT'S THREE POINTS	23
BEYOND CAPE HORN	33
PA POSEIDON AND FATHER NEPTUNE	43
THE FOO-FOO BAND	51
MCGINTY TAKES UP GARDENING	61
FROM THE DOCK TO THE STAGE	69
SWEETS BEFORE THE BIRD	77
" WEAR SHIP! "	85
SATURDAY TO MONDAY	97
THE NELSON TOUCH	107
PRANKS ON PADDY	115
FAVOURITE PORTS	123
CERRO AZUL	135
DANDYFUNK AND PLUM-PUDDINGS	147
SEVENTY-FIVE GUINEAS PER CENT.	155
A SQUARE MEAL	167
EVERLASTING GUESTS	171
HOMeward BOUND	177
ON RESOLUTIONS AND THE NEXT VOYAGE	187



DAN CRELLIN

HE was a shipmate!

To a sailor, these few words convey a wealth of meaning.

Six feet three, gentle as a lamb, with the ferocity of a black panther, and as agile; possessing the strength of a bull, and withal, the heart of a child.

Truly it could be said of him, every finger a fish-hook, every drop of blood pure Stockholm tar, and every hair good yellow manilla rope-yarn.

From him, much could be learned of the ways of sailormen, their resource in difficulty, their ignorance of fear, their tenets of a true socialism where every man does his best for the good of all.

Down the centuries when his forebears embarked in their frail bark-covered coracles to meet Imperial Rome, in the three-hundred tonners of Drake, a ship of the line at Trafalgar, or the persistent destroyers at Jutland, he and his breed would be found.

He came aboard in Newcastle, New South Wales, on Saturday morning. With a critical eye aloft, he unerringly made for the Captain.

"Good morning, sir, will you have a look at my book?"

The inspection of the "discharge certificate book" was brief, the reply was to the point.

14 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

“ Get your gear aboard. ‘ Sign on ’ at the Shipping Office Monday morning.”

“ Aye, aye, sir! ”

Thuswise did Dan Crellin join the full-rigged ship *Brenda* as an A.B.

His reach-me-down blue serge, being the largest size possible, and even then tight-fitting, showed him to be the possessor of a magnificent torso.

With a quick lithesome step and an easy graceful roll as he walked, he appeared to be about twenty-five to thirty years of age. His mahogany-coloured face with its numerous wrinkles round the eyes and forehead, and his corrugated neck, proclaimed him forty-five, but some fine Sunday morning you may peep over his shoulder as he indulges in that joy of all sailors, turning out the contents of his ditty-dox, with its photos, letters, medals, and documents of major or minor importance, and you’ll be surprised to know that he is over sixty.

Before going ashore for his “ gear,” he had a peep down the main hatch, the scene of the crew’s labours, a glance at the Second Mate, who was superintending the discharge of sand-ballast, amounting to about six hundred tons of the Sandwich Islands, a more careful scrutiny of the Bos’n, for Dan was a keen, though perhaps unconscious, analyst of character and human nature, then with an agile leap to the rail, he disappeared down the gangway.

The Bos’n’s scrutiny of Dan was no less keen, and turning to the Second Mate he said, “ Tough nut, sir, but he won’t be in your watch.”

The Bos’n was right, for the First Mate has first choice.

With the advent of noon, work ceased until Monday morning. The men were very thankful for that day to arrive, for with the “ signing on ” of eleven men, the present short-handedness would be remedied, and labours consequently lightened.

.

A wheezy and a noisy whistling from a tiny steam launch alongside, brought the apprentices in a hurry from their midday meal. There were many attractions, chief of which, however, were the mails and the new hands. The latter were all nearly sober. In addition to this, none of them had been on the "beach" for long.

By their hats ye shall know them.

Bowlers for the first week, soft felts for the second, and caps or any old thing until the next "paying-off." So for once in her unfortunate voyage, the "hoodoo" Brenda was lucky.

Squareheads, Finns, Scandinavians and Britishers, they scrambled aboard, each one helping the other, with their kit-bags and boxes, or it should be said, sea-chests, for your true sailorman scorns the use of the modern cabin trunk.

Dan's first words were, "Thank God, I'm going back to sea. I've had enough of mail boats."

The observant would glean much from this remark, the cause of his discharge abroad and his abilities as a seaman.

While the "squareheads" kotowed to the Mate, Dan chose his bunk, and promptly installed his bed and possessions.

He then went aft and took up a position in the rear of the new hands who were giving their names to the Mate. One of the Finns knew but two words of English.

The Mate asked him his name.

"Don unnerstan'," was the puzzled reply.

A compatriot frantically pulled at his coat, jabbered a weird jargon, and then he said, "Palidone Malajolices!"

The Mate spluttered, "What's that?"

"Don unnerstan'," was again rapped out, followed by an appealing glance behind to the compatriot.

A hasty whispering and "Palidone Malajolices" was repeated, this time in a firmer tone.

16 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

The Mate wrote down "Don unnerstan'," and then called out, "And the next?"

Like a shot came the "Don unnerstan'," but a burly Teuton, aided by a vigorous tugging at the coat, displaced the now extremely nervous Finn.

In the queue behind, a rather squat German, Koenig by name, turned to Dan and said, "Vat der hell mid. Vy because him on bord gomm, ven no der Englisch can spik?"

Dan, ever a humorist, replied in his own native language, Manx, at which the "squarehead" turned away in utter disgust.

The Mate, on hearing Dan's name, inquired if he was Irish. Vehemently came the reply, "No, sir, Manx." And he was only mollified by the Mate's remark that good sailors came from the Isle of Man.

The names having been taken, the Mate told them to go forrard and get their dinners.

Nice new enamel pannikins and plates were fished out from the recesses of the big canvas bags, followed by knives, forks and spoons that were easily bent but not broken.

Being a German, Koenig was an easy first in the "Dinner Stakes," and Dan, with one arm deep down in his kit-bag, yelled out across the fo'c'sle, "Here you, young fella-me-lad, as you're all ready, go and bring in the dinner."

Koenig, very much surprised at himself, did as he was told. He, however, passed on the "commanding air" and dragged with him the two Finns. The cook, in reality a very mild-mannered man, habitually wore a fierce expression, added to which he was busily engaged, sharpening a nasty-looking knife. Don Unnerstan's doubts of the cook were somewhat heightened by the burning hot "kiddy" of soup suddenly placed in his hands. At the sight of further "kiddies" of roast beef, cabbages and potatoes, understanding lightened up his face.

The afternoon passed away in preparing for work.

Dan got out his neatly patched dungarees with many spots and marks but scrupulously clean. Oil-skins were hung up, for nothing deteriorates them quicker than air. Sheath knives were taken out and sharpened. It is in such small things as these that nationality asserts itself. The Finns and Swedes possess the short round-handled knife with a heavy blade, whilst the British and German favour the larger but lighter flat-handled ones. The leather sheath belonging to Dan's knife bore evidence of his craftsmanship, for the end was "pointed" in ornamental fashion with fine cotton fishing line, being also strengthened at the mouth with a fancy cut and figured leather band. Two turk's-heads round the handle made the knife easier to grip. Old as the hills is the saying, "A sailor without a knife is like a cow without an udder."

Dan's sea-chest, too, claims attention as an index to character. Made of stout wood, it tapered slightly towards the top. Small as they were in comparison with modern ideas of a trunk, a glance at any seaman's chest will reveal a halo of romance, and Dan's was no exception. The lid, covered with snow-white canvas scrubbed by loving hands, had a fringe which is perhaps best described as drawn threadwork. This alone would be the envy of any "mothers' meeting."

Instead of the usual iron or leather handles, there were "shackles" resembling a horseshoe in shape. The three-inch pin made of brass by which the shackle is attached to a wooden shoe on the side of the chest, had a fancy crown knot at either end. For the rest, the turk's-heads, which, to the layman, had neither beginning nor ending, the invisible and cunningly tapered eyesplices, the pointwork, the worming and parcelling, the painting of the whole in bright colours, was, if not exactly a work of art, at least a very good example of the craftsmanship of a sailor, skilled in his calling. The body of the box, like almost all seamen's chests, was painted a sea green with a black two inch skirting board round the bottom, the object

18 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

of the latter being to raise the box from the deck when water was present. Inside, at each end and close to the top, were two little compartments, and prior to entering a seaport, you may perhaps, if no one else is about, see Dan pulling out the bottom of one of them to disclose a very narrow false end to the sea-chest which is useful for smuggling a pound or so of tobacco, not with the intention of evading Customs Dues, but simply to beat the Excise Officer. Furthermore, it is sometimes necessary to "raise the wind" in a foreign seaport where the Captain is tight fisted.

It seemed difficult ever really to understand Dan. Whether by long experience or intuition, more probably both, he rapidly sized a man up and he was dealt with appropriately. There were always a few who hated and feared him, but never openly. Some were "ticked off" with a jocular remark and a laugh, whilst a laconic "Shut up" was sufficient for others. To the genuine trier and the youngster, Dan was a veritable encyclopedia of seamanship, folk-lore, adventure or advice.

He was tolerant, for a kind word in season to the "hobo"—a bird of passage, but no sailor—often marked the turning point of the making of a good sailorman. When Dan started a man on the right road, he saw to it that there was no deviation.

Remarkable though it may seem, he never aspired to authority, and as a result, often found himself under the orders of a man immeasurably his inferior in ability. Yet, instinctively, but with tact, he took command, and in those moments on a ship where a quick decision is necessary, he would suggest and at the same time carry out the correct tactic.

So it was with Richard Quirk.

He was a Manx apprentice, and being a fellow-countryman of Dan's, he naturally expected some favours and attention. He certainly got the attention, more than he desired, for Dan, walking up and down

the deck one "dog-watch," stopped alongside Quirk, who was washing his clothes.

"Your name's Quirk, eh?"

"Yes," replied the youngster, all agog.

"Come from the Isle of Man?" was Dan's next query.

"That's right, Dan. You come from Peel, don't you?"

"Well—yes—I was born there," said he slowly, then quite abruptly he ejaculated, "Are those yours?" indicating some shirts and things hanging on a line.

"Why, of course, Dan, I've just washed them. Didn't you see me hang them up?"

"Well, they're damned dirty. You'd better wash them again. I suppose when you wash shirts you say to yourself,

*"First the sleeve and then the breast,
Bother the tail and all the rest."*

Dicky Quirk quickly checked the impulse to laugh at the amusing doggerel, and hung his head.

Four and a half hours afterwards Quirk rose up from the spar on which he was sitting, his arms and back aching, to hang up the results of a lesson in washing clothes.

"And don't forget, young fella-me-lad, every Saturday afternoon at two or four o'clock according to your watch, you get your clothes washed properly, and don't forget your neck as well," was Dan's parting shot over his shoulder as he went to tea.

Many times during the voyage Quirk felt that Dan's tutorship was irksome, but the results were extremely beneficial, for Dan, ever ready to be the first at an arduous job, dragged Quirk with him. Often would be seen the unusual spectacle of a junior apprentice on the yard-arm, hauling at the reefing tackle with gusto, and giving the "Song," for this was the work usually performed by the seasoned men

of the sea. Quirk also missed many hours of sleep in his watch on deck, for Dan insisted on him pacing the deck when no work was toward. Nor was Quirk alone in this, for all of the boys took every opportunity of imbibing Dan's wonderful knowledge.

His seamanship was the practical seamanship of ships that had been, of wrecks and strandings, and fires and typhoons, of strange cargoes, and of how they behaved, that grain was a deadly dangerous cargo, that a Captain never lost sleep with gunpowder aboard, that a rate of two guineas insurance on a timber ship, with a list of fifteen degrees, was an absolute waste of money. He told of the potents and signs of approaching hurricanes, the clouds and squalls, the seas and the rollers, and in which direction safety lay, though he had never heard of the law of storms. When asked if he knew the law of storms, his reply was "He didn't believe in lawyers or parsons."

And the *Brenda* caught fire in Valparaiso Bay a few months afterwards.

Ginger, with hair on end and eyes on pintals, bawled in the half-deck door at five in the morning :

"Come on, you fellas! The after-hold's afire!"

Price, from the depths of his blankets, drawled that it wasn't five-thirty yet, and anyhow, where was the coffee?

"Stop your squealing, Ginger." Dan's voice outside the door had a steadying effect. "Go along for'ard and ring the bell. Better take a hammer with you in case the lanyard breaks."

Ginger, now having a definite object, was calmer. Meanwhile, the rest of the boys hurriedly dressed into dungaree trousers and shirts, and rushed on deck.

"Collect up all the buckets you can, boys." Dan's voice was low yet penetrating, a voice that carried well, and by now he was half-way aft, pushing the huge wash deck tub with Quirk close beside him, barefooted and wide awake. But the buckets of water were futile, for the fire had got a good grip. Nor

were the man-o'-war's boats with their pumps much better.

Amongst his many experiences Dan had been a fireman in a New Zealand seaport, and without questioning anyone he had taken charge of the business end of three hoses. Not only that, but under the very eyes of "Chips" he had hacked small convenient holes in the deck—the carpenters' beautiful and beloved deck.

When, owing to hundreds of tons of cargo suddenly "caving in," the poor old *Brenda* took a sudden list of forty degrees to starboard, it was Dan who calmly said to Quirk, "Keep your face close to the nozzle, my boy. There's more air there." Everyone else jumped for it over the side.

Perhaps Dan would have kept Quirk there yet had it not been that the Navy men said that it was hopeless, and took their hoses away.

For the safety of the other ships in the anchorage, the *Brenda* was towed out of the lines to an open anchorage.

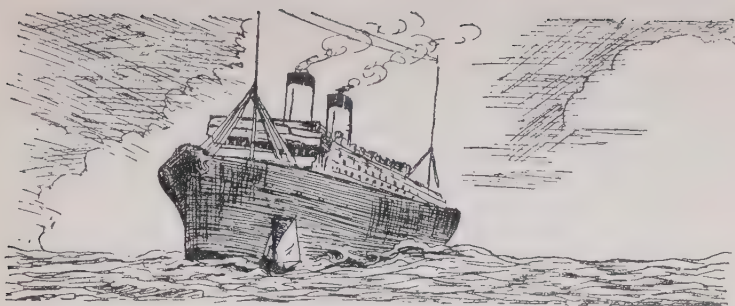
When the boys furtively shed tears at the loss of their first ship, Dan understood and refrained from talking. Nor did he miss the splendour and glory of the magnificent spectacle of a sailing ship on fire.

In a few hours a northerly gale sprang up, whilst the ship, defiant still and burning fiercely, was driven ashore on the rocks.

Six weary boys in trousers and shirts were told of the things to see ashore, for Dan could understand the suddenness of the blow, the loss of home, of gear, and things beloved.

It was Dan, too, who reminded them of how every ship in the vicinity had sent hands to help.

He had shown them the lesson to be learned, that the sea is an exacting mistress and a cruel lover, and the boys, with advancing years, have also found out that there are many Dans among sailormen, else the Merchant Service would not be what it is.



THE TRIDENT'S THREE POINTS

How handy he is, is realized by but few people, yet the Captain of a ship has a multitudinous host of duties to perform, in addition to being a Jack-of-all-trades.

Alas! His powers are fast waning, not because he has failed in the past, not because he has, in an official sense, lost his power of judgment, but because of progress as exemplified by speed and communication.

High-powered steamers and the telegraph are primarily responsible. So too, in a lesser degree, is the modern fad of pampering and mollycoddling by Governments; for, whatever may be said, seafaring is a man's job and needs no nursing.

It is in the sailing ships where the Captains will be found who exercise the most power in these modern times. Yet even at the present time in the largest and most luxuriant Atlantic liner, once clear of the confines of a seaport, the Captain is an autocrat with the power of life or death, and, if those powers are seldom used, it is because passengers must be humoured. A host of officers assist in the thousand and one duties of looking after a community the size of a town; discipline is well-nigh perfect, and communication is possible to anywhere at any moment of the day.

24 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

Furthermore, barely a week elapses between ports.

This is not so, however, in a sailing ship, for land may not be sighted for three months, and sometimes it may be six months between two ports. In such a time a lot may happen, for communication is entirely cut off with the outer world.

What would be your decision, for instance, if, after four months at sea, a mailboat signalled that there was a war with Germany? What would you do with the eighteen German sailors out of your total crew of thirty-one hands? Would you go on to your German destination, now only distant a week's sail? Yet such cases as these were fairly common at the beginning of the late war.

As typical of the mariner's resource, consider the case of a large Liverpool liner in an Austrian seaport when war was imminent. The bulk of the crew were of enemy origin, yet a mere handful of men, mainly officers and petty officers, slipped away at night, working the huge ship by themselves to a port of safety.

And again, two Atlantic liners of a well-known company in Antwerp, when that city was on the point of being captured by the Germans, were brought across the North Sea safely to the Thames by one of their Captains, who was supposed to be on "light duty" as a sick man.

One of the steamers had no engines, and had to be towed all the way, and the crew of the other consisted of barely a dozen men.

Yet it is a feat of seamanship to navigate one large steamer down the Scheldt, let alone another in tow.

So that being a doctor and midwife is comparatively an easy duty for a master mariner to perform. Of course he then becomes the registrar of births, and officially, as well as ecclesiastically, baptizes the newly-arrived infant, and if the Captain's daughter wants to marry the Second Mate, it is done and entered up into

the "Official Log," that wonderful life record of a ship.

True, the record may be sandwiched in between the entries of "Heavy squalls to the south-west" and a "dose of No. 9 to A.B. C——," but it casts no reflection on the future happiness of the young couple, for on the very same page "Apprentice John R—— received a rope's ending for stealing eggs out of the hen-coop," and "A.B. M—— was fined five shillings for using threatening language to the Bos'n."

Every one of these entries are prefaced by "At — p.m., ship time, in latitude —, and longitude —, fresh breeze following sea, etc.," so that if there should be an appeal, the weather may not be used as an excuse.

Once in a while there will be a pathetic entry.

"At one p.m. 'Dennis,' the pig, was slaughtered, cleaned, and salted. Weight, 210 lbs."

Very close underneath is a significant series of entries.

"The following members of the crew had wounds and bruises dressed:—

"F. B——, carpenter, cuts in knee, left hand, and thigh.

"S. M——, apprentice, crushed hand, bruised thigh.

"P. F. T——, A.B., sprained ankle, cut on forearm.

"A. A——, sprained ankle."

At least the pig died game.

Then there is mutiny. Even in these days it is not unknown, but a good heart-to-heart talk, a little better food, and perhaps a sore head or two, results in the entry:

"In accordance with Section umpteen of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894, the following A.B.'s will have ten shillings stopped from their wages for insubordination."

In a very serious case, force of the strongest kind

26 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

will be used, backed up by firearms if necessary, and possibly, as a result, some of the ringleaders will finish the voyage "in irons," i.e., handcuffed behind and around a stanchion in the 'tweendecks.

It is not true that old sailors "fade away." They sometimes die, or perhaps there is a fatal accident, and then the Captain performs his saddest duty of all—the funeral service at sea over a shipmate. Even in this, the successive duties may be surgeon and doctor, coroner, priest, undertaker, sexton, and auctioneer, for it is customary for the dead man's effects to be sold amongst the crew for the benefit of his widow or dependents, all of which proceedings are faithfully recorded in the "Log."

And the most important duty of all—to his King and country. But the nation at large have not forgotten how he did that a few years ago.

Such are some of the duties of the Master of a ship.

Most landspeople imagine that one of his duties is to steer the ship, but that is the work of the Quartermaster.

The other day it was announced that a Gyro-Pilot had steered a ship—a big Cunarder at that—across the Atlantic, and he is not a Quartermaster, that wonderful aide-de-camp of the liner's officer.

He is merely a mechanical box of tricks, a wonderful box, too, be it ever so grudgingly admitted even by the saltiest of tar-blooded sailormen.

The question that springs to the mind; will he oust the Quartermaster?

The Q.M., as he is known at sea, is a man of multitudinous duties, of which the steering of a ship is only one. His work is not spectacular, yet he is the selected one from many.

Perhaps the most important qualities he possesses are reliability and integrity. As an example of this there comes to the mind that much bandied phrase, a "lead swinger," and the Quartermaster is a lead

swinger in a literal sense, even in these days of patent sounding machines. In times of doubt, he and his mate, one on either side of the ship, will be found over side on a specially constructed platform.

They are to make soundings by the antiquated method of a weight on the end of a marked line. Notwithstanding its antiquity, it is reliable when performed by good men, especially on entering and leaving harbour, and hence the "lead swinger." Grizzled old Quartermasters knew the soundings of certain harbours so well that they simply swung the lead to and fro, meanwhile calling the deeps and marks with gusto, for it is no joke hauling in a seven pound piece of lead from thirty fathoms deep.

Strangely enough, the Q.M. is seldom in the public eye on a big passenger liner, except perhaps when posting up the day's run in the various saloons. Nevertheless he is an important unit in the crew for he is expected to be as near a perfect sailor as is possible in these days of few windbags. As like as not, he will have had some experience in windjammers, and his principal duty is the steering of the ship in narrow waters, bad weather, or at any time when none but the best helmsmen are required. At other times he is in constant supervision of the steering wheel in the hands of an able seaman.

The Quartermaster snaps his fingers at the Bos'n's mates, for he is responsible to the officer of the watch and no one else. Not for him the drudgery of holystones or brasswork, yet none does more of that kind of work, nor does it better; for the navigating bridge is his alone to keep clean.

Yet he will be jealous indeed of the praise bestowed on Iron Mike, an eight-foot high iron box, with complicated electrical "innards," for the Captain of the liner on which Gyro-Pilot—Iron Mike's Sunday name—was tried, stated that the ship saved eight or ten miles a day by superior steering.

In this new-born jealousy the Quartermaster will

grimly smile to himself as he pictures that selfsame Captain asking Iron Mike to make a cup of coffee—and hot, don't forget—at three bells in the middle watch. And how long would it take the mechanical steersman to go down and wake up a sleepy-headed officer in time to relieve the bridge at eight bells?

What would be the use of that wonderful mechanical steering hand when fifty thousand tons of a man's wonderful handwork has to be threaded in and out the crowded shipping of our large seaports?

In the sudden emergency of icebergs and fogs the Quartermaster, alert and tense, obeys the merest flick of a finger from the corner of the bridge, and in emergency too, when all else fails by way of communication, it is the Quartermaster who is the official dispatch runner to the uttermost parts of the ship—sometimes on his last long journey's end. So it is recorded in many an epic of the sea. Iron Mike could do no more than that.

The majority of a Quartermaster's life is placid and serene, but in the moment of prompt action and resource, he is the forerunner of authority. In his two hour watch by the after wheelhouse at the stern, the lynx-eyed Q.M. is the first to throw the lifebuoy and flare to the man overboard, and sound the alarm.

Whether it be fire drill, boat drill, or the real thing, he is the backbone of the crew, and that is the strength of the Merchant Service.

Small wonder then, that in his hours of ease he will be studying navigation books for his examination as Second Mate.

The mechanical pilot will be allowed to take his trick at the wheel for days on end, so long as the weather is clear and shipping scarce, but always somewhere close at hand, the Q.M. will be repairing flags, preparing new log-lines, or perhaps marking hand lead lines.

With his own hand he will record the entry in the "scrap" log, "Weather foggy; switched off Iron

Mike." The old Q.M. has seen the advent of numerous mechanical labour-saving gadgets.

In the not far distant future the Quartermaster will hear with relief the order "Switch on the Gyro-Pilot!" and with an air of pride in the accomplishment of difficult work well done, he will hand over the wheel to his mechanical menial for as long as there is no danger.

Mechanics are well enough for monotony, but when resource and initiative are required—or a cup of coffee, it will be "Quartermaster! Where the——"

If there are any social strata among the crew, then the Quartermaster and saloon-deck men are on the same level.

The face of a thousand wrinkles, hair somewhat grizzled, eyes that rival that of a seabird for clearness, and a skin that is tanned a mahogany brown by salt, sun, and squall; a fountain of true knowledge, the knowledge of Nature herself; these are some of the characteristics and attributes of the saloon-deck man.

To hundreds of thousands of passengers he is the Baedeker of the sea, and weather prophet of the ship, their sheet anchor in the storm, and their guide in the sudden emergency—sometimes, too, he is the hero of some epic that re-echoed round the world.

To those who have met him he is the embodiment of Britain's maritime sea glory.

To those who have engaged him in conversation—and mark well, it is indeed a privilege—who knows to what flights of imagination and romance his yarns have led.

Like all true sailormen he has exaggerated and has been believed, he has stated a fact that has been answered by raised eyebrows, and the narration of some commonplace affair has been received with downright discredit, but he, nevertheless, goes on for ever.

The saloon-deck man is seldom met who has not been an actor in some thrilling drama or episode of the sea.

30 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

Likely as not, his experiences go back to the time when the sailing ships were in their heyday, perhaps, as he himself will say, to the wooden ships and iron men.

That the iron men have not rusted will be proved by a glance at his medals obtained only a few years ago, for pluck and endurance has no age limit.

In the matter of his medals proceed cautiously. Such things are not paraded for mere landsmen to look at, and the more he has, the less chance there is of seeing them. Besides, his account of happenings are not known by the world at large, being, as they are, a personal account of some small episode, generally humorous.

Who knows but what he prefers to remember the huge mosaic of some drama by some tiny but brightly coloured stone of mirth?

He lives too close to Nature not to realize that he may be next to pay the price of admiralty.

Amongst his calling he is an aristocrat. Being a "dayman" he is trusted to carry out his duties without supervision, and between the hours of six and seven a.m., his especial care is the brightness of brass portholes and the removal of every drop of water from the varnished hardwood doors and the teak rails. Disdainfully and with thankfulness, he watches the Bos'n's mate hustling up the starboard watch, clearing away hoses, brooms, and squeegees, because the first of the passengers are appearing for their early morning constitutional, and to his favoured ones he will indicate the rain squall to wind'ard that will pass astern. So, too, he will point out a sheltered spot for the deck chair after breakfast, for the wind has "hailed out four or five points!"

Finally, he will add, with an air of considered judgment, that it will be a fine day for the deck sports.

The request for the "bull board" from some prospective champions, is immediately granted, backed

up as it is by ravishly brown eyes and the neatest of ankles, for your true sailorman has a wonderful eye for fine lines, and brown is seldom seen at sea.

A matter of moments and his head is buried in his locker on the saloon-deck. In it he keeps his brooms, and swabs and polishing rags.

Dozens of deck quoits, which by their outwardly simple appearance indicate but little of the cunning craftsmanship employed in the making of them. So, too, are all the rest of the paraphernalia connected with deck games and sports, kept in the locker which is about the size of a cabin.

Shortly after breakfast, the saloon-deck man is in great demand. To one he describes the making of a cricket ball as used at sea; to another a few tips about cock fighting (human variety). A very reverend gentleman is enlightened with regard to religious services on sailing ships, and with some apprehension at the spiritual destination of sailors in general, hastily turns the conversation.

Learned judges and captains of industry accept the old sailor's ruling on deck golf with a gravity befitting such an important judgment.

Philosophers and men of science ponder gravely over some simple statement.

The very reverend gentleman will find out later when he has penetrated beyond the rough and unpolished exterior, that although the sailors' creed is simple, it is nevertheless sincere, for it is founded on fellowship.

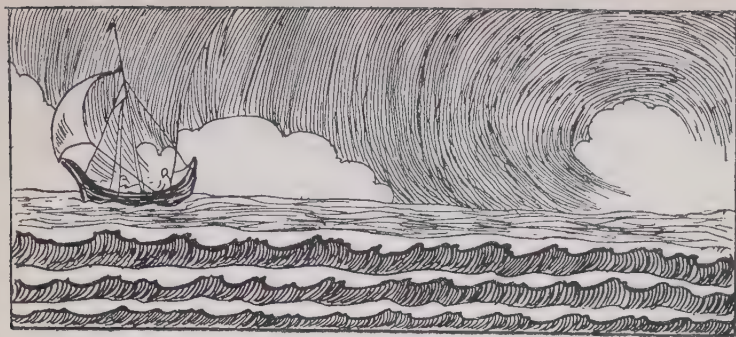
From eleven a.m. the old salt is in greater demand than ever. The question now is, what is the day's run? Will it be as good as yesterday?

Each and all receive an appropriate answer according to how high they stand in favour.

Need it be said that the fair receive every consideration, and when the number of miles run are officially announced, there will be some who will challenge these figures, because they are not in agreement with old Dan's reckoning.

32 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

Long after the ship's name has been forgotten, when the events of the voyage have faded away, perhaps even when the hair has whitened, little mannerisms and sage pronouncements, and dozens of little services of old Dan, the saloon-deck man, will be remembered with a glow of pleasure.



BEYOND CAPE HORN

"He's got it! Haul away, Ginger! Let's give a hand!" And Ginger, as excited as any schoolboy—indeed he was hardly more—commenced pulling in the spunyarn hand over hand, meanwhile playing the line to every roll, pitch, and toss of the ship. Turner, being the eldest apprentice, crossed to the lee side of the poop to take charge.

The Second Mate, still in his teens with a boyishness that was coated with dignity, came aft to glance in the compass. The wheel kicked a dozen spokes either way with every swing of the ship's head, for there was but little wind, and the afterbirth of a storm showed itself in the oily dark swell from several directions.

Mechanically, the helmsman controlled the kick of the wheel as he watched operations and offered advice as opportunity permitted.

"A crack on the side of the head with a belaying pin 'll keep him quiet," remarked the Second Mate as he closed up on the weather side of the wheel-box.

Johansen, with a critical glance aloft, turned round slowly as he dexterously caught the spinning wheel.

"Dere's noding beats a sail needle trew de eyes. Clean an' quick. Shust lak dat." He flicked his

fingers and caught the wheel again and the end of its spin.

Knowing no better method the Second Mate fell back on Authority, and bade some new arrivals to make less noise. Whispers became intense in their suppression, and one and all craned over the rail.

"Now, Turner! On the next roll!" Ginger's voice thrilled at his first kill.

Outstretched hands eagerly clasped the wings of an albatross as it topped the rail, its beak firmly jammed in the apex of a pork-covered metal triangle on the end of the line.

In a moment the wings were "crossed," the magnificent bird was completely helpless, and on his way for'ard in the middle of an excited throng who were already apportioning out the various trophies.

The helmsman leant across and struck "one bell."

In an instant there arose a crescendo of "Weigh hey-hey hey! ho! Rise and shine, show-a-leg, show-a-leg." And the Port Watch regretfully rubbed their eyes and prepared to dress.

"What's that?" yelled Cumberland Joe through his pipe's first cloud. "The boys ha' caught an albatross?" Joseph wept, an' well he might! "Why in hell didn't yer stop 'em?" he went on as he jerked up his trousers.

He waited not nor looked for his belt. Committing another crime of the Seamen's Calendar, he flung open the weather door as he snapped over his shoulder, "Swell going down be damned. You'll see!" he added significantly.

With a gaffawed "Ruddy old fool!" Walker continued his recital of the happenings of the afternoon to the "watch below," who, by now, were wide awake. Joe's voice, raised in anger, could be heard outside. Never hail-squall nor frozen spray had whipped men's faces as Joe's tongue lashed their consciences. But it was too late, for Ginger was stretching the skin of the

snow-white breast on a cask-head. A brief scuffle and the spinning piece of wood landed with a plop on the oily roller passing away to leeward.

"There's longer hair on my chest than on your chin, you hobo galoot," said Cumberland Joe pantingly, as he spat contemptuously in the scuppers.

He suddenly turned round again to the youngster who was facing him defiantly. Both were breathing hard after the short but sharp scuffle, and nearly a score of the crew were standing around. Shaking his fist in Ginger's face and raising his voice above the creak and clang of parrel and truss Joe went on again :

"Aye! And Almighty God 'll teach yer the price of a murdered albatross before the set of another sun."

Nobody spoke as he turned and entered the fo'c'sle to resume dressing in preparation for his trick at the wheel.

If a paradox there be on earth, it is the autocratic socialism of seafarers. They spend their lives battling against their common enemy, the elements, and, as a result, each crew becomes a complete community, all for each and all. Yet, to the erring one, justice is swift and harsh, even as it was to tribal ancestors. There must be no weak links.

Russell, though not an old man, was a good sailor-man, and justly entitled to speak his mind, and where Joe left off he carried on.

"Blast yer eyes! Here we are ninety-three days out from Sydney, and not round the Horn yet. When d'yer think we'll get home?"

"When we get paid off," bawled the irrepressible McGinty, and the ensuing roar of laughter relieved the tension.

"Five minutes to eight bells," said Toby, a junior apprentice, and the crew of the full-rigged ship *Brenfield* resumed their normal work-a-day life.

The long twilight of a winter's day was drawing to an end. Leaden skies merged with the dark smooth-

36 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

topped waves. Occasionally a sea flopped aboard amidships where the carpenter and a helper were going round the main hatch tapping the wedges with a maul.

From aft came the sing-song wail of the Second Mate's voice.

"A hand on the look-out!"

The command sounded plaintive amid the protest-cries and groans of a ship labouring in an almost windless solitude of huge rollers, and then from aft, too, came the tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, tinkle of eight bells. A string of beetle-like beings emerging from fo'c'sle and half-deck, waddled aft in the gathering gloom.

Being assembled below the poop, Cumberland Joe, in the forefront of the still closing crowd, hailed the Second Mate.

"The watch is aft, sir!"

A curt "Relieve the wheel and look out!" was the response, and the shiny oilskinned crowd moved for'ard again in the deliberate manner of seaman; that is, all but Joe, who mounted the lee side of the poop, and placed himself behind the man at the wheel.

"She's kicking like hell, Joe. Better take yer coat off."

"The old cow!" was Joe's *sotto voce* reply.

"And dat stuff's banking up on the lee bow," continued Johansen, a Swede and a born sailorman. "Old man says the barometer is down in the bilges. Blow like a son of a gun to-night."

"Well, what d'yer expect?" said Joe sententiously, as the other stepped down from the wheel-box grating.

The Second Mate paced aft towards the wheel.

"Full and bye," barked Johansen, "course vest by nord."

Joe repeated the instructions and the Scandinavian crossed to the officer.

"Full and bye, sir! Course vest by nord."

Johansen was right, for at half-past five, from the

darkness beyond the binnacle's corona of light, the Old Man bellowed, "Hard up the helm! She's all aback."

But the command had been anticipated, and between the kicks of the rudder, the wheel spun under the cunning hands of old Joe. There was but little wind, yet the alteration in direction was a sign not to be ignored by sailormen.

An outstretched woollen mitt wiped the rain off the binnacle glass, and a broad shining black back thrust itself between the man at the wheel and the compass. The ship's head was still paying off, aided by the rollers on the weather bow.

With a sigh of relief at the flapping mizzen tops'l, the Captain drawled in a matter-of-fact tone, "Clew up the mainsail at four bells, Mister."

From the darkness ahead came an emphatic "Aye! Aye! sir!" followed by a shrill blast on a whistle.

With legs wide placed in graceful poise on his beloved planks, the same graceful poise that on shore became a waddling gait, the Captain took up a position at the break of the poop to supervise all hands furling the huge mainsail whose area was somewhere in the region of six thousand square feet. It was not until half-past nine that the welcome order of "That will do the watch below" was given. Joe was glad of his meagre supper, and the Captain, despite the increasing west-sou'-west gale, went below with an easy mind, for the ship was snug for the night under two tops'ls and a fore-staysail.

The wind increased, and its direction was such that all hands were required to wear ship at midnight in a heavy snow squall.

At quarter-past twelve, three heavy seas swept the decks, and Joe was washed overboard.

"Man overboard!" was the cry along the decks, but all knew it was so much wasted breath. For a few seconds it seemed as if Joe would be washed back on board again, for he was plainly discernible amidst the

38 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

frothy white smother of foam, struggling hard to get his knife to cut off his heavy sea-boots.

The moment was tragic, yet his blown-out oilskin coat looked grotesque. So he passed slowly astern, and thirty-four men could not help him. In their mercy a life-buoy was not thrown to him.

In the gleam of a hurricane lamp held by Ginger in the lee of the companion-way, the Captain read the Funeral Service at Sea.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith . . ." The ship rolled to windward, and the screeching of the gale in shroud and spar rose in an eerie crescendo. Two hundred and fifty tons of huge green sea thundered aboard by the mainmast, and involuntarily all hands looked for'ard. With a rattle like a tattoo the reef points of the tops'ls slatted the frozen sails. *" . . . in Me shall never die . . ."* And the stem, high in the air, sunk down on the crest of a sea with a sickening thud that was accompanied by a crash of crockery in the cabin.

The Old Man bawled in the Mate's ear, "Have we got to read all these pr——"

" . . . Man that is born of woman hath . . ." Every time the ship rolled to leeward comparative quiet reigned aboard, and the Captain's voice could be heard by the tight-lipped men around *" . . . in one stay. In the midst of life we are . . ."* The look-out man for'ard struck one bell at half-past twelve, and clear down the wind in the quiet leeward roll came his sing-song voice.

" A-l-l's w-e-l-l-l-l ! "

" . . . the bitter pains of eternal death . . . we therefore commit his body . . . Holy Ghost be with us . . ."

Ginger sobbed openly and was defiant in it.

None slept in the middle watch, although the First Mate distinctly said, "That'll do, the watch below."

It was Paddy who stopped suddenly on the poop at

quarter to eight in the morning watch, and dropped the binnacle lamps on the deck. Reverently he crossed himself, for sailing majestically along the weather rail was a snow-white albatross. The crew's depression of the night was turned into superstitious fear; for the soul of a drowned sailorman makes his abode in an albatross.

Ginger took off his coat. In wearing ship the man at the wheel has plenty to do. The Captain's first command was echoed man by man throughout the ship.

"Stand by the main and crojack braces!"

The Captain waved his hand to Ginger as a signal to put the helm up, and then in a stentorian voice to the First Mate:

"Slack away lee braces, Mister!"

In tumbling cascades of swirling water, breast high, the First Mate obeyed with a cheery "Haul away, boys. Haul away to windward."

Slowly, inch by inch, and foot by foot, the giant spars were hauled round, but there was no song, no cheeriness in the work.

Slowly the ship fell off before the wind, aided by the foreyards, still braced up sharp. But ever above their heads was the albatross; sometimes close astern, sometimes sailing along the weather side.

A beady eye watched every movement.

"Steady the helm!" bellowed the Old Man.

The wind was behind the ship, and the great foreyards, straining at their lee braces, were waiting like tremendous powerful hounds in the leash.

The lee braces were coiled down, and at the signal, they would fly in writhing coils, whilst every soul hauled in the other side.

Unlike the afteryards, which required every ounce of strength to pull them, the foreyards swung round with the whole force of the gale behind them, and speed in hauling in the slack ropes was the only requisite.

40 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

But the helm must be carefully attended. The steering must be rigorously controlled, for, should the ship turn broadside to the huge seas, while the yards were uncontrolled, while the crew were in the exposed waist of the ship. . . .

The Mate and his helpers were ready with their hands on the braces. Every man stood at his station. The sheer joy of contest lit up their faces, and there was promise of song and shout in their work . . . moreover, that damned albatross was almost out of sight gliding alongside the poop.

Eagerly the Mate watched for the signal.

"Haul away fore braces!" Suiting the action to word, the Captain flung his arm in the air, and the startled albatross, close behind and above, flinched in his flight. The tip of its wing touched a backstay, and down it fluttered, down, right on to Ginger who screamed in his frozen fear . . . but the great foreyards were swinging their rattle song accompanied by chanty and creak, song and groan; while Ginger struggled with a perplexed and afrighted bird, and the ship swung round to meet the terrible broadside seas.

The first of the seven-ton steelyards crashed on deck, while the Mate stupidly gazed at the stump of his arm, and wondered why the frothy water swirling about his body was tinged with crimson.

The "Caller" made his way through the throng of underwriters to the bell of the one-time frigate *Lutine*. Deliberately he tolled it three times, and instantly there fell a magic silence over the members of Lloyd's.

There was news of a ship overdue. Notes were hurriedly consulted, so as to be ready to quote reinsurance rates. In a few seconds some of the listeners would be losers or gainers of thousands of pounds.

In a sonorous voice the "Caller" read out

“ . . . the full rigged ship *Brenfield* . . . being two hundred and four days out from Sydney . . . has not been spoken . . . heavy weather . . . presumed to be lost.”

Yet two beady eyes saw what happened.



PA POSEIDON AND FATHER NEPTUNE

IN the matter of luck and superstition the sailorman's beliefs are extensive and deep-founded.

Let it be understood, however, at the outset, that the sailor's peculiar beliefs are his own. They are not shared by landspeople. Nor does the mariner place much credence in the foolish superstitions of those who tread terra firma.

Why should a sailorman worry about spilling salt, when for centuries all his food has been thoughtfully salted—and well salted, too—by kindly ship-owners?

And just imagine the hilarity of a crew meeting a piebald horse—east end first—forty-three miles south of the "Line"!

Take the case of "Snub" Russell, a cross-eyed A.B. All the crew have seen him every hour of the day for the past sixteen months, and nothing special has happened.

Yet if "Snub" were to whistle, it would probably be the prelude to mutiny. No matter how much wind there is at the moment, whistling indicates the advent of some more. Moreover, to whistle is the prerogative of those in authority, with possibly an exception in the case of the man at the wheel.

In a dead flat calm the "old man" will solemnly whistle for wind and he'll get it—when the wind comes, for, after all, wind will come some time.

Maybe the calm will last a week, by which time the Mate, Second Mate, Bos'n, "Chips," and the Cook will be assisting. By this time, too, the Captain will make sacrificial offerings to Neptune or Poseidon, even as the Romans and Greeks did some two thousand five hundred years ago.

Well, perhaps there is a difference.

They did it more reverently and more expensively, whereas the "old man" will sacrifice an old boot or a button or even a foreign copper coin, that is, if he is unlikely to visit that country in the near future.

Just to help the whistling and sacrifices your true sailor resorts to another religious rite, that of scratching, with a knife, the mizzen or aftermast. It is to be noted that one of the sailors in the now famous epic of the S.S. *Trevesa* did this with due solemnity.

Thousands of years ago a small Poseidon was carried on board in the same position occupied by that mast. Reverently the mariner of those days made an offering of metal to the God of the Sea, for metal was scarce in ships. As sailormen had to fight, they carried weapons with them, and it is more than likely that the ceremony consisted of offering a sword to be blessed. Probably Poseidon's toes were tickled with a knife to make sure he understood.

Strangely enough, all, or nearly all, these superstitions concern weather, good or bad.

For instance, catching a shark ensures a fair wind.

Well, why shouldn't it? Sharks in plenty are found in the tropics. Ever constantly, the two trade winds blow year in, year out, with a belt—sometimes very small—of calms or doldrums between them, and as a dead flat calm is requisite for shark fishing it will not be necessary to wait long for a fair wind. Both the trade winds are fair to ships on any voyage.

Similarly, to catch an albatross is, on many ships, strictly taboo, for a gale is sure to follow—and it does follow.

Like a shark, the albatross is only to be caught in a calm. The "Roaring Forties," that never-ending belt of gales and storms which encircle the Southern Hemisphere, is the haunt of this, perhaps the most magnificent of birds. Maybe once in every ten days there will be twelve hours' calm, and albatrosses are only caught in a calm.

Every ship has its Jonah, and although he is not treated exactly like his Biblical original, nevertheless the crew are not tactful in hiding the fact.

All is well when he is not at the wheel, but as certain as the sun rises, so is every trouble attributed to him during his "trick" at steering. It is not uncommon for the others to arrange for his duties being taken over in periods of expected stress of weather, in which no doubt he readily acquiesces.

The seaman's peculiar beliefs, however, do not concern the weather only. One of them relates to his belief in the soul of a ship.

There are some who will say that it is impossible for a ship to have a soul or temperament, but sailors know differently.

After all is said they are entitled to an opinion. Do they not depend upon a ship as their very home for long periods? Certain it is that there are ships with bad characteristics, just as there are some with good ones.

Most people have heard of the hoodoo ship, which is by no means rare. From the laying of the keelson to her final destruction by wreck or fire she exerts a baleful influence upon all who are concerned with her. Men are killed and accidents involving thousands of pounds occur with a frequency that is startling.

Stories of her infamies are told in all the sailor-towns of the world, and the underwriters abhor her

several names, for, likely as not, efforts are made to change her malevolent career by new names.

Her crew desert her, regardless of punishment or loss of wages, for she is hoodoo, even in the trivial round of daily life aboard.

Yet her sister ship, built on the same shipway by the same workmen, built frame for frame and plate for plate, pursues a peaceful even tenor, voyage after voyage. Who will say what is the cause of the difference between them?

It may be from the curse of a soldier. Perhaps some magnetic influence was beaten into the frames and plates. Maybe the stars in their courses were impropitious. Perhaps some cargo cast a spell on the ship or perchance it is just feminine waywardness. Not for nothing are ships referred to in the feminine gender.

It must not be taken for granted that a ship will be hoodoo all its career. Some of them acquire it in the latter part of their existence, and of these, experience proves that they are even worse than those ships wicked from birth.

There was the case of such a ship, well found and fleet, whose lines were the cynosure of all true seamen.

For fourteen years she had been faithful, and frequently established new records in her sailing prowess. Pride and efficiency breed each other, and she was the pride of her fleet, flying the Commodore's burgee.

Homeward bound up the Channel in the early days of the twentieth century she was sighted by a Calais-Dover cross-channel steamer with all but the mizzen royal set; this, despite the fact it was very squally and blowing hard.

Even as they, on the steamer, were admiring the wonderful sight of a full-rigged ship crashing through the seas under a heavy press of canvas, the *Donna*—that will serve as well as any other name—was overtaken by a heavy snow squall.

When the squall passed away some twenty minutes

later there was no sign of the *Donna*. Just as easily as two and two are added together, so the name of the ship was established, for she had "spoken" a number of ships and signal stations just previously and without further ado the *Donna* was reported as having foundered with all hands.

Before the underwriters and merchants had commenced to calculate their losses she was safely berthed in Hamburg, having accomplished the journey from the "Lizard Lighthouse" to Hamburg in a bare thirty hours, which is no mean feat for even a high-powered steamer.

The *Donna's* Captain, with the help of a four knot tide, had taken advantage of the squall to press on, relying on a proven ship and a well-tried crew, and had passed through the Straits of Dover at nearly twenty knots an hour.

Was it pique at such an ill-merited slur on her sailing powers?

From that day the *Donna* was a hoodoo ship. Her career afterwards would be a narrative in itself.

Her influence seemed to extend itself to companion ships, for she, being one of six ships that left Hamburg on a fine May morning, was the sole survivor at the time of her final destruction a year later. Yet in that time the *Donna* had been ashore at least half a dozen times, with nearly as many collisions. The first death was in the vicinity of the Canary Islands. A couple more of the crew were dashed to death from a tops'l yard off the "Horn," which was only rounded after nine weeks of incessant battering. With frozen halliards and braces and the yards braced against the stays she scudded before a fair wind while the crew thawed the ropes with hot water from the galley.

The first day's respite in fine weather found the crew battling a fire in the forehold. Small wonder that at the next port her crew like one man preferred prison to her caprices and were brought to the ship in irons to complete the voyage. Even then two of them

48 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

in their handcuffs essayed the four mile swim through the shark infested harbour of Honolulu. Hundreds of pounds worth of sails were blown away in a hurricane amid the South Sea Islands. And the rats left her a year to the day when she caught fire. But she strived and struggled until a "nother" drove her ashore in Valparaiso Bay, still burning, but not before she killed two more men.

Some of the young apprentices wept at her going, for she was their first love and could be forgiven much, but the old "shell-backs," dry-eyed and hard of heart, muttered her benediction. To them she was an old cow and a hoodoo ship.

Seamen are chary of signing on in such a ship, so much so that it is difficult to obtain a crew of decent sailormen. Such a ship becomes manned by "hobos," "down-and-outs" and "sogers," thereby helping materially the hoodoo's evil career by inefficiency.

But she trains her crew well, such as are left alive at the end of the voyage, for, being ever in trouble herself, her crew become resourceful through sheer necessity, the only alternative being death.

Just as there are hoodoo ships so there are lucky ships that cover themselves in glory.

The laws of chance or coincidence have but little to do with their success, which is continued in spite of a change of crew or officers or even name.

Captains consider themselves lucky to be appointed in command and underwriters chuckle with delight when accepting the insurance premiums.

Fast voyages and good health are the rule rather than the exception, and the marine superintendent does not scan too closely the stores' list, for such a ship is the apple of his eye. Her crews catch the spirit of good luck, and in the confidence bred from achievement go on from success to success. This legacy is handed on from crew to crew instinctively, and the spirit of emulation does the rest.

For hundreds of years the annals of our merchant

service teem with the records of both kinds of ships. Between these two extremes there are those which run the whole gamut of human emotions. Some are slow and sluggish in their manœuvring capabilities. Others again are quick to a point of viciousness. Not a few are "dirty," which term amongst seamen means that they ship water aboard in bad weather. In particularly bad cases seamen will express an opinion that "she'd ship water in a drydock."

When it is considered that a seaman is compelled to share the virtues and vices of a ship for perhaps a year or so it is not to be wondered at that he will evince decided likes and dislikes towards his various homes. Strangely enough, throughout the whole of his life he will always remember some small virtue of a hoodoo ship, however bad she may have been.

He would be very reluctant to "sign on" in her again, but her very wickedness taught him something of that resourcefulness in time of adversity which is the very foundation of our maritime strength.



THE FOO-FOO BAND

WHICH INCLUDES DENNIS, A SOUTH AMERICAN PIG OF
IRISH EXTRACTION

NOBODY knew exactly how it started, but we blamed Evan Jones.

Although he was Scotch he didn't mind.

About half a mile away in Latitude Umpteen South, were the Chinch Islands. About the same distance, or so it seemed, was the Sun, whilst we envied the coolness of the bower anchors a bare seventy fathoms away.

In a place where men are hung for walking on the grass and where it hasn't rained for four decades, it may be taken for granted that the mercury was bashing its head against the top of the thermometer.

The pitch oozed and bubbled from between the deck seams, and as Evan Jones stepped out of the galley with a kiddy full of boiling hot soup his left foot stuck to a bad patch of pitch.

Over went Jones *and* the soup.

"Snub" Russell so far forgot his sense of duty of getting even with the owners by eating hot soup in the tropics that he commenced to kick the kiddy about and miraculously kept beautiful valse time with Majolica, a burly Russian Finn, who was just then

52 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

manfully grinding out "Over the Waves" on a large German melodeon.

It was infectious.

As if by magic half a dozen things happened at once. MacGregor did a step-dance, two marling spikes in the hands of "Poppy" contributed a "triangle accompaniment," a very effective side-drum was provided by Collins out of a biscuit tin and two potatoes. The rest of the crew emptied themselves pell-mell out of the fo'c'sle, dancing commenced, and Dennis, a two hundred pound porker, and the pet of the ship, wondering why he had received a hot bath in the tropics, disgustedly rubbed his haunches on the freshly varnished deck-house.

So commenced one of the best "foo-foo" bands on the West Coast, a band that eventually nipped a revolution in the bud.

Of course, it took months to mature, but the members were enthusiastic, and for weeks there was bustle and activity amongst the crew.

The Captain "fished out" an old banjo that he had hardly used since the days of the "Black Ball" Line. He was puzzled, however, at the request for two cigar boxes, but in an evening "Ginger" made a couple of one-string Japanese fiddles.

A pound of "slop-chest" tobacco purchased a guitar from one of the "Lancheros," although at the time no one knew how it should be played.

But the pride of the band was the big drum. Chips did his worst on a beef barrel. The Mate, without lament or comment, presented a fathom of Number Nought Canvas, the best in the ship, or for that matter, in the world. The sailmaker's heart and soul went in the making of the eyelet holes round the canvas circles, and once again the Mate's heart was touched, for instead of common spun-yarn he handed over a ball of hauseline with a grin that suggested "Keep the change."

In a shipowner's office in Liverpool on the

Dunfield's List of Stores for Voyage there was an item, "Leathers, pieces of chamois, 6," yet two of them adorned the drumstick heads.

Horny, hairy hands painted weird ships and designs on the drum, in more colours than any spectroscope ever showed.

With much wetting and stretching it was carefully prepared under the guidance of "Dusty Brown," whose only qualification was that he was once "converted" by the Salvation Army.

Every marling spike in the ship was requisitioned in order to provide a set of chimes, and many an hour's filing had to be done by "Chips" to bring them into tune.

Some large sheets of copper foil were used as fortissimo thunder effects.

Two of the largest size pot lids minus the lips made an excellent pair of cymbals, whilst for side and kettle-drums there was infinite variety, ranging from the body of an old banjo to a large three-ply tea chest *via* various tin boxes and frying-pans.

Mouth-organs were ruled out because they could not be heard sufficiently loud enough, but one valiant soul, Enrico Torrini, who was called Macaroni Spaghetti for short, persisted to the end with a jews' harp.

Our *forte*, however, was the contingent of combs and paper together with two soup spoon manipulators.

The band had to be seen to be really appreciated, for the facial expressions of the former together with the contortions of the latter even made Dennis laugh. At least Murray said so, and he understood pigs, for he was born in Galway.

Dennis, delighted in having the spoons clacked on his back, was looked upon as a member of the band until one day he ran amok and pushed "Dusty Brown" and the big drum overboard.

Every opportunity was taken to rehearse the band. Fortunately no other ships were lying at anchor in the roadstead, and fortunately, too, the Captain was able to

54 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

go ashore when he liked. Much as he disliked a horse, he always rode to Pepillo, a town seven miles inland, with the excuse that the scenery was very nice there.

It was unanimous that MacGregor should be the conductor. He had once been a middleweight champion. In addition to this he was a good step-dancer and he could give an excellent burlesque of Sousa. Besides, he was the only one with pluck enough to cut down the Captain's ebony walking-stick into a baton, and the Captain never missed it until the next attack of lumbago.

Our first public performance, so to speak, was when the Peruvian Auxiliary Cruiser *Constitution* limped into the anchorage with one screw and a thirty pound head of steam. We played "God Save the King" and "Rule Britannia," and suddenly remembered we had not got our ensign up

Our Captain being Scotch, prided himself on his taste in whisky. The Capitan del Puerto (local Mayor and Harbourmaster) helped as well.

The success of the apologies may be judged from the fact that the "Owner" of the *Constitution* resumed an ordinary vocabulary in less than three-quarters of an hour, only to lose it again before midnight.

The next day we gave a command performance, but the audience remained on the *Constitution*, and in the middle of the performance a large coastal mail-boat arrived, the first for a fortnight, for our anchorage and the township adjoining were not very important. Nevertheless, every available "flotero" (boatman) lingered as long as possible in our vicinity, in their journey between the ships and landing jetty.

Round after round of cheers greeted each number, and in the intoxication of success the "Foo-foo" band went from one triumph to another, and hundreds of couples on the two steamers (mostly male)

danced to the strains of the ever popular "Over the Waves."

A large sixteen-oared barge cast off from the *Constitution*, and almost simultaneously a smart gig left the mail-boat, both heading for the *Dunfield*.

Proudly from the stem of the naval boat floated the Peruvian Ensign, and, as if in response, a tiny Chilian flag was cheekily poked up in the gig, and it developed into a race, the gig ahead all the way, with each ship's company cheering their choice.

The rivalry between these young South American nations is more than friendly, for the war of sixty years ago is not yet forgotten. So, although the gig led all the way, the barge steered a straight course and biffed the gig amidships, as she executed an "Admiral's sweep" to make the gangway head to tide.

Even if it were not good seamanship, the Flag Lieutenant of the *Constitution* nimbly jumped aboard long before the barge reached the stern moorings whilst the gig's crew were sorting out their oars.

With many felicitations from his Captain and expressions of wonderment and praise for the performances, he begged the "Old Man" that the "Foo-foo" band would honour the crew of the *Constitution* with a visit that evening. Being in Peruvian waters the Captain accepted, and in twenty minutes MacGregor, with home-made pince-nez and a false beard, was arranging the band on the warship's deck.

With a double zing-zang, zipp-zipp, boom-boom we embarked on "John Peel."

It is to MacGregor's credit that whenever we encountered a difficult passage, he *slightly* encouraged the drums and combs.

The second chorus was somewhat faulty in metre, because Toby in his zeal clipped Price's ear in the cymbals.

It was whilst we were playing "Three Blind Mice"

that the Commander politely complimented MacGregor on his attempt at "Rachmaninoff's Prelude." As "Three Blind Mice" was our favourite piece we were immensely pleased.

Owing to a misunderstanding, the combs commenced a chantey called "California," while the "strings" and "winds" stuck to a popular mazurka. The banjos and drums adapted themselves freely whilst the conductor did a step-dance. Fortunately we all finished together. We were loudly encored.

At this point refreshments were offered, and speaking broadly, the second half was more fortissimo than the first.

With the exception of Price's ear and the "combs" running out of tissue paper, we arrived back undamaged, having played "Auld Lang Syne" on the way, at least that was what MacGregor instructed us to do.

The night-watchman lost his sleep that night, but we felt we *had* to learn some new tunes; for the last distinct words of the Capitan del Puerto, as he was pulled out of the water again, were an invitation to the band to help celebrate the local "Independencia Fiesta."

Everyone commenced practising by himself as the time wore on, and Murray wouldn't have wakened up so early if Dennis hadn't turned over.

"Wash down decks" was welcome. The Germans and Scandinavians were unlucky, for only three of their heads would fit in the wash-deck tub at one time.

That was the morning that "Ginger" made a discovery. He had been cleaning out a seldom-used locker right aft, and he was cursing his luck that he had to bring out for cleaning the mechanical foghorn such as is used on sailing ships. It possessed a very loud bray made by four large bellows and some reeds. There was not any particular musical note about it, but it was really useful because in addition to its own

bray it always made the cocks crow, and Dennis disapproved of it strongly as well. So the foghorn, together with its enemies, joined the band.

The autocratic Captain of the Port ordered a succession of "Surf Days," which meant that we were not allowed to load our cargo, but our Captain viewed with mixed feelings this concession to enable the band to practise.

But worse was to follow.

Black Pedro, a swarthy native and local tub-thumper, decreed that a strike should commence on the eve of the Celebration of Independence. He was a mighty power amongst the local workers, for he could swear in English and had once served in the British Navy, although he seldom told that it was only for five days—as the Canteen Manager's market porter. Neither did he tell that the Canteen Manager was still looking for him.

It must be admitted that he was powerful locally and was extremely generous with money, whose origin was presumably the opposition political party.

As the Presidential Elections had taken place five months before, the time was ripe for revolution—red, ruddy and resolute.

And in all this, Black Pedro held the trump card. He had the situation in the hollow of his hand, for he was the big drummer and boss of the local band, the only entertainment in the place, except watching people work.

The loyalists (*pro tem.* that is) viewed with alarm the approaching menace to their numerous "Civil Servant" berths.

Exaggerated rumours of the impending revolution reached our ears. Even the very "zero hour" was given as eleven-thirty a.m., which, as MacGregor said in an awed whisper, "It just gives us time to hitch our trousers up and part our hair," for we were due in the Plaza del Sol at ten-thirty a.m.

"Snub" Russell, ever fearful of the "Owners"

getting to windward of him, forcibly expressed himself, "'Ere we are, twenty-three months out and, not counting tobacco, I only drew £3 15s., a suit of oilskins and a panama hat. An' the 'Old Man' sez to me, 'Russell, don't wash the panama 'ard or the starch'll come out.'"

A general laugh ensued at this, and Russell somewhat angrily ejaculated:

"Well, 'ow the 'ell was I to know that pigs liked starch?"

"Dusty Brown" grinned and guffawed.

"Holy Curry and Rice!" said he. "The first Dago that lays hands on me I'll——"

Enrico Torrini imploringly held out his hands, "Watta der chance me got weeth a chews' harp?" and he straightway went off to help Majolica turn the grindstone and sharpen his knife.

The total number of loose iron belaying pins in the ship was forty-two, but the Mate declared that he took eighty-seven out of the two boats and then the band had twenty-three when they landed.

Long before we reached the square, "Dusty Brown" swore that the next band he joined, he'd be a comb and paper sucker.

To say the least of it, a crowd had gathered round our flanks, and turning up a street we found ourselves facing the Andes. We didn't like to turn back because MacGregor said that the people with us looked rather fierce.

It was then that "Poppy" in a fit of temper shook the sheets of copper foil vigorously and the crowd scattered. We would have done so too, only we didn't know which way to scatter.

We drew out our belaying pins as a cloud of dust approached.

A horse's tail and two hind hoofs stopped suddenly alongside "Dusty Brown." From the other side of the big drum Brown saw the dust clearing away from the Capitan del Puerto, who was excitedly exclaiming,

"Play ze band! *Play ze band!* Follow me! *Follow me!*"

He was the one person in the town in whom we had any faith and we gladly offered to follow him—but play, and on the march too. Phew!

There was no rush for a place in the front rank until Ginger said that that would be the rank nearest the ship. After which the band consisted of two concentric circles with the flanks moving to the front.

"Poppy" had another fit of temper, and it was five minutes before we caught up to El Capitan. However, we bagged two policemen with their "hands up" and agitated knees. Murray said it was the first time he'd seen a Spanish fandango, but give him a "rale Oirish jig, which was asier than dancin' on the knees."

"Dusty Brown" with his sweeping drumsticks kept the front rank to himself, and we settled down to a tune on entering the first important-looking street.

Three more policemen and two dogs joined us. The latter were welcome although they were not well acquainted with our tunes.

Suddenly we came upon a small crowd of about forty men. While they were wondering whether to do it "Manana," the Capitan "viva-ed" and "brava-ed" something in Spanish to them, and then they "viva-ed" back. They almost fought for the honour of carrying "Dusty's" drum, but "Poppy" nearly spoiled the whole thing with his copper sheets and temper.

Next came our triumphant entry into the Plaza del Sol, which being from the landward side misled Black Pedro to think we were his supporters. He came to meet us, and of course his audience dispersed. Likewise so did his chances of being the local leader of a successful revolution.

As is the national custom, the *Constitution* put out to sea to settle the political differences of the crew, which being done, was then indicated to the

60 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

world at large by their selection of a northern or southern seaport, if the revolution had not finished in the meantime. MacGregor thought that, as conductor of the band, he deserved a horse. He got a mule, missed the festivities and did not return to the ship till four a.m. next day. He also learnt a lot about cyclones and dust storms.

Instinctively realizing the value of good communications with our base, we made our way to the Plaza del Mar, which was close to the waterfront and the boats.

Never did the town of Quilpana see or hear such an affair as the Foo-foo Band before.

The Captain of the Port's trusty charger would not prance in any direction but backwards. "Dusty Brown" said the horse did not like the colours on the drum.

Two dagoes carrying a boat's mast with the chimes and "Poppy" with the sheets and several side and kettle-drums made the second rank, winds and strings were in the next three ranks.

Macaroni Spaghetti and his jews' harp had a row to themselves. The Siamese twins, being the spoon clappers, had *carte blanche*, being, as it were, the "corner men," whilst the rear was made up of a strong contingent of combs and paper. Black Pedro sought "Dusty Brown's" company and thereby lost his last shreds of leadership.

The *Constitution*, just re-entering the bay, heard the Foo-foo Band and assumed that the revolution was in full swing.

Gleefully the officers were locked up and parties landed only to fall victims to us.

Can anything more be said except that in the archives of a South American Republic, an historical record is preserved of the achievements of our Foo-foo Band.



McGINTY TAKES UP GARDENING

MCGINTY went back to sea again last Thursday, and if you should ever meet him don't mention flowers unless it is in connection with Sullivan's funeral.

Now McGinty was a real sailor, but so disgusted was he the last time I met him, that he was even fed up with the sea. That's why he sailed away in a mail-boat.

"Of course it was all Sullivan's fault," McGinty remarked to me.

It appears that McGinty had a half share in a sweepstake—and it won. The first intimation he received was in the "Blue-Eyed Sow" when he was told to pay the cost of a round for everybody in the three bars. He was stunned with advice on how to spend the money, but McGinty had his dream of a nice little cottage with a half acre or so of ground.

It was natural that McGinty should appeal to his best pal. Now, a few brief months afterwards, Sullivan is no longer a pal. Although McGinty has lost a friend, he has acquired a wonderful knowledge of gardening, which is a proof of Emerson's law of natural compensation.

The way that money talks, too, was an astounding thing to McGinty, for, in a few days, a dozen estate

agents called upon him at the Sailors' Home. Each had a car, some cigars, and the deeds of the nicest property for a hundred miles around. In turn, the old shell-back inspected a much disused Abbey, a shooting lodge, a condemned village schoolhouse, a windmill, and a kipper curing factory.

McGinty emphatically refused to look at a lighthouse complete with a skeleton of a wreck, and five sheep browsing on the cliff, for he felt he wanted to get as far away from the sea and mutton as possible.

The visit to the Abbey was disastrous. In the first place, McGinty did not know what an Abbey was.

In glowing terms the agent enumerated the qualities of each pile of stones. At the mention of the cells McGinty trembled visibly, but he brightened up when the agent said, "Here we have the vaults."

"Just about time too!" muttered McGinty in a very relieved tone.

"I beg your pardon?" the agent replied icily.

"You said something about vaults," was the sailor's retort.

"Quite right, sir," went on the agent. "It was here that the monks buried their dead. In fact, it has been stated that this magnificent portion of the estate is haunted, but that, sir, should not worry a gentleman of your undoubtedly strong nerve." The agent paused a moment and then said: "I see that you have no objection to spirits. Now those strawberry beds should——"

"You're right!" interrupted McGinty, "but I'd rather have a long drink in this warm weather. Besides, I don't want the ruins of a church. I want a solid little whitewashed cottage!" That's how McGinty had to walk three and a half miles to the nearest station.

The next day McGinty, after seeing the shooting lodge, agreed to take it. In vain did they try to start the car for the journey back. The result was a night on the Welsh mountains in a lodge that failed miserably against the rain that set in. A nine mile walk to the

nearest house next morning convinced McGinty that he was not interested in shooting.

Without looking in a dictionary McGinty found a word of six letters beginning and ending with D, and which meant the same as condemned. Thus ended the drive to the schoolhouse.

On the fourth afternoon of his quest McGinty was in that state of mind when he took but little interest in anything.

On arrival at the windmill, he caught hold of the agent's hand. "Ever had a bet?" said McGinty quizzically.

"Well—only very occasionally," was the puzzled reply.

"Now look here, I'll bet you five pounds I can tell you the first six words you say," was McGinty's confident statement.

In his eagerness McGinty blurted out "Now this is one of the most desirable pieces of property which has come into our hands, and we are fortunate——"

Just then a very pretty girl came out of the doorway.

"Who's that?" ejaculated McGinty.

"Oh! she's the miller's daughter," replied the agent. It's a poor agent who is not an opportunist. Thus McGinty explored every corner and nook of the windmill until he was introduced to the husband of the miller's daughter.

The only remark that McGinty made on the drive back, was that windmills might be unhealthy places to live in.

McGinty's inspection of the kipper curing factory was suddenly terminated by a clout in the eyes from a herring, and the irate wielder of the fish informed him that she was well and truly married in Aberdeen wi' sax bairns. Besides, fishlike eyes had no attraction for her.

McGinty's vision of a nice little home and a garden kept fading away until one day Sullivan led him to see a nice new brick house. There was no doubt of the

house being new. There was the usual air of peacefulness which one associates with a building in course of erection. It was as if peace had followed war. Men lay around in various attitudes. The roof was open. The surrounding ground was composed of holes both large and small. Perched perilously on the edges of the holes were bricks and slates. Planks leaned against the house which did not seem strong enough to bear the strain. Perhaps it wasn't, for there were planks on the other side, too.

McGinty pulled his left foot out of a lime pit.

"Eureka!" yelled Sullivan, excitedly.

Instantly three of the recumbent figures sat upright.

"That's in the three-thirty," said one. "Wot's his price?"

McGinty's tone was frigid. "Look here, Sullivan, I can swear for myself, and not in them foreign words, either."

Sullivan was effervescent and ignored the remark.

"Here you are, McGinty," he went on; "a nice little house and a fine stretch of ground"; and Sullivan raved on about the beauties of a well-kept garden.

Even McGinty began to be carried away.

"Where's the garden?" he suddenly interpolated.

"Where's the garden?" echoed Sullivan in a distressed voice. "Why, all round you, man," he added.

"Now let me see," he went on, reflectively. "The road will run from that broken tar barrel to a couple of fathoms beyond the wheelbarrow. Everything from there to that rubbish heap——"

"Which one?" snapped McGinty, peevishly.

Sullivan was still enthusiastic, however, and he indicated with a half-brick.

A British workman takes notice of a half-brick behind the ear as quickly as anyone, and Sullivan hurried McGinty round the lee side to inspect the possible site of a tool shed.

McGinty's pugnacious reply to the aggrieved work-

McGINTY TAKES UP GARDENING 65

man suffered much in his difficulty of extricating his right foot from a slab of semi-viscid pitch.

Twenty minutes of such trouble will break a strong will, but Sullivan saved his life by airily remarking that everything in the garden would be cleared up by the builders before they left, so for days McGinty made preparations for his onslaught on the garden, the while he became legally possessed of that desirable property in process of erection known as "Rocky Holme."

On a day in May, McGinty deliberately took off his coat in the presence of Sullivan, Russell and Walker.

Quite as deliberately he hung it on the front door knob.

Walker excused himself for a funeral, for he found out by leaning against it that the front door had been freshly painted.

With one final glance at a handbook on gardening McGinty drove his spade into the ground, dead straight for the Mersey Tunnel.

There was a click, and McGinty looked puzzled.

"Must be something there!" remarked Russell.

All got on their hands and knees and scratched out a large stone. The garden began to sink as the pile of stones, bricks, bottles, wood, and things grew larger in the place that would be a roadway. Sullivan and Russell did most of the work in order to keep McGinty in a good temper.

Russell conceived a wonderful idea.

"How about building a shed with what's left over?"

A glare from McGinty caused Sullivan to dig furiously again.

"You ought to be deep enough now," said McGinty after a while.

Sullivan's reply was a sod as big as a Liverpool directory.

"Nope!" added McGinty, firmly. "You must get two feet below the sod before attempting to trench."

Sullivan sat down and sulked.

Russell tried the art of peacemaking.

"Look's to me about four feet deep now," he remarked, in a conciliatory tone. "Let's rake it over and sow the grass seed."

"All right," said the others simultaneously, and Russell was left with his own baby whilst the others smoked.

A day later the ground looked nice in its pegs and stones.

"Where in the hades did those stones come from?" ejaculated Sullivan.

"They grow outer the ground like flowers, so I was told at the 'Blue Eyed Sow,'" was Russell's reply.

"Better rake it over again," said McGinty in a nasty tone.

Some hours later McGinty exploded.

"Here we've sown a small corner, and all the seed's finished."

Sullivan's attempt at tact was misplaced.

"Maybe the agent has sold you a farm instead of a plot," said he.

Russell made matters worse by substituting pup for farm.

The brightly coloured flowers on the packets cheered them all, however, to a fresh orgy of seed scattering.

Slowly two days crept by and anxiously they sought for the first signs of shoots. A dozen magnificent shoots appeared on the lawn. After five hours' argument it was decided to call expert opinion. They were dandelions.

"But we didn't plant dandelions," snapped McGinty.

Expert advice further suggested that they should be rooted up at once, not merely snipped off, but followed down to the end of the root. It was the only way.

McGinty tackled the first one. That was a marvellous dandelion. They followed it down three sods, a layer of shavings, and an inch and a half of cement.

McGINTY TAKES UP GARDENING 67

That dandelion had faithful allies too. Half-bricks prevented flank attacks, the sods were armoured with pieces of slates and laths, and besides the root did not go straight down. In fact, McGinty solemnly stated that it had been taught zig-zagging in the submarine campaign.

Three determined men, however, can finish any job.

Then the other dandelions could not be found, for they had been covered up. Expert advice suggested recommencing the lawn again. There was one bright cloud in this. The 'Blue Eyed Sow' did a good business, for experts are, as a rule, very dry people.

Four days later the shoots again appeared. Dandelions first; the rest nowhere.

Then it was that McGinty propounded the first principle of gardening.

It even made the expert pause and think.

"It seems to me," said McGinty, "that we've found a certain method of telling which are weeds and which are not."

Even the expert paid attention.

"Pull up everything, and those that come up again are weeds," was McGinty's comment.

It was then that Russell said he'd rather go back to sea than be hanged, and Sullivan fidgeted nervously until Russell was out of sight.

The expert said it was only a matter of time. "In any case," he added, "I'd better be off in case my scarlets commence to run."

McGinty spat on his hands and grabbed the spade viciously.

"I've killed so many worms these last few days that one more or less won't make any difference," he said in a determined voice.

Ten minutes later Sullivan consoled himself with the thought that he could easily get another coat. He was three miles away before he regained his breath.

By the way, that desirable residence known as "Rocky Holme" is for sale.



FROM THE DOCK TO THE STAGE

“How handsome he looks!” Thousands of the fair sex must have passed this remark when observing the liner’s officer, resplendent in gold lace and kid gloves, parading to and fro apparently without a care in the world.

Occasionally, it’s true, he speaks into some sort of a box arrangement which those in the know will affirm is a speaking tube. Whence, or to whom he is speaking, goodness only knows, for the other end of the ship is the sixth part of a mile away.

On the other hand, those of the sterner sex will remark on the “softness of the job that young fella’ has.”

Although this is Saturday afternoon that young fella’ has been busy, very busy, since Thursday morning.

The modern liner is no exception to the fact that a huge and complex organization requires an enormous amount of preparation and constant supervision with an added difficulty that nothing must interfere with the comfort of passengers.

Thus it is, that what appears on the surface to be a self winding eight day clock, is really wound up once a day with authority and discipline. The

70 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

wheels are well oiled with much elbow grease and honest sweat.

Sometimes too, it may be necessary to use a little "Scotch Navigation," i.e., a mixture of brute force, a flow of strong language, and the use of a fourteen pound sledge hammer.

Yet the whole is skilfully covered up with a velvet glove. Small wonder then, that in a recent collision, a fussy passenger rang for hot water and at the same time inquired if the passengers would take to the boats before or after lunch. Furthermore, she was somewhat perturbed as to what was the "correct wear" for open boats.

This brings us back to the preparations which make such a wonderful reliance on the crew possible.

Consider the case of a liner due to sail at six p.m. on Saturday.

For over three months she has been in the hands of ship repairers, and now, only three days before sailing; to be precise, ten a.m. Thursday, nearly a thousand men and women are in one of the 'tweendecks for the purpose of "signing on" as a crew.

Some of the men might not look like sailors but they are necessary.

There's the gardener, baker, butcher, plumber, blacksmith, painter, fishmonger, greengrocer, ladies' hairdresser, masseuse, anæsthetist, librarian and dentist. Perhaps some day there will be a few railwaymen and tram conductors, for there are sailors of the present day who cannot remember the advent of the lift attendants.

Don't forget that the crew are new to each other and new to the ship.

It may take the gardener two hours to find his palms, creepers, and bulbs. Perhaps at the end of an hour the orchestra will find each other and commence practising, but everything must be clockwork by Saturday morning.

Alongside the ship are ever growing piles of

baggage, and two out of the seven executive officers are responsible for its safe custody until dumped on the other side of the Atlantic.

Then, too, another officer is preparing for the reception of mails whilst yet another has had notice of the embarkation of one and a half million sterling in gold bars, not to speak of several packets of precious stones.

A thousand names have to be allocated to the various life-boats in the proper proportion of seamen, stokers and stewards, stewardesses, and the gardener.

Some twenty or more fire stations are allotted crews.

A hundred and fifty engines ranging from the huge propelling turbines to the tiny water pumps have to be tuned up by the forty or so qualified engineers.

The plumber has to attend immediately to a burst water-pipe on the ground floor and a defective tank on the eleventh storey, but perhaps the latter is a job for the boilermaker.

The first brakeload of emigrants, speaking a language heard only on the other side of Europe, arrive alongside even as a hundred stewards are preparing their beds and a meal.

Tea-time and supper-time go by; far into the night the work goes on, and chaos gives way steadily to orderliness.

A few keep going through the night, but the main part "turn in."

Sailors must be fond of worms for long before the earliest birds commence to twitter they are at it again.

Dozens of the stokehole fires are lit, still more stores and luggage bound aboard in half ton portions. The chickens alone aggregate thousands.

Then a bugle sounds and in ten minutes the Chief Officer (not to be confused with the First Officer) passes down the lines of the assembled crew.

There is a pride, generated by new uniforms, of masses of men in lines, of being a unit in a large

72 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

liner, which gives the whole a wonderful bearing and uprightness—added to which the majority of them, from the Commander down to the gardener, are Naval Reservists.

A bugle and sharp commands followed by a mad scamper is the commencement of boat drill.

Then ensues a little "Scotch Navigation" which continues until the officers are satisfied.

Fire-drill rapidly follows. Each little unit has to fit into a place.

Telephones and speaking-tubes are in constant use . . . and still the baggage comes aboard.

An officer turns a tiny handle on a bridge attachment. Everywhere bells are ringing and for all the world like Episode Thirteen of the "Umpteenth Bride," massive iron doors in all parts of the ship automatically close remorselessly.

A steward unused to such a sight, drops a bag of potatoes across the path of a closing door but the door closes as if nothing had happened.

The steward shudders to think of his fate had he been inside the sack and then he learns of the safety lever alongside each door . . . also to step lively when that kind of bell rings.

Dominating everything is the Chief Officer—stop-watch in hand—and he is hard to please.

A perspiring "sulphurous-tongued" First Officer is "trying out" a new patent method of launching boats. His trained seamanlike mind condemned it before he started but it was invented by a maiden aunt of a director.

Oh! what tact is possessed by our liner officers . . . and what language when no one but sailors are near at hand. He hurriedly sends for "Chips" and the blacksmith to repair the damage.

Time and tide wait for no man—not even a liner—and accordingly a dozen noisy tugs that talk vociferously to each other by toots and whistles, assemble round the mammoth and in their cheeky way suggest

that it's time to get a move on, high water being at midnight and there's only two hours to go.

Not only two hours to go but five locks to negotiate—and look at that pile of blankity blank parcels post to come aboard, not to speak of the “washing.”

Calm and dignified is the liner. None of her crew bawl and shout. Oh, no! not when there's dozens of telephones and navy phones and weird waving of hands that express themselves in not merely an alphabet, but in a complete language.

For instance, there are four main engines and in several parts of the ship officers know instantly when they are moving, in which direction and how quickly. By merely glancing at the stern it is known if there are any obstructions to prevent the propellers turning.

The catering department make heroic attempts to get the last of the washing aboard, but the Captain is adamant.

He flicks a finger and whispers something about a gangway. The four stewards standing on the suddenly dropped gangway may be excited, but no one else is.

The grizzled old Company's pilot looks over the side of the bridge and waves a hand just as a man would do to his wife when he goes to the office. The last four mooring ropes splash into the water, and just like a pack of terriers, the tugs commence yapping and tooting and actually wagging their tails, or in the language of the sea, their sterns.

Some half a dozen of them appear to have nothing to do, for no rope connects them to the leviathan.

Suddenly there is a burst of toot language and three of them dash madly towards the stern of the liner, revealing their enormous power in the sudden spurt and tremendous churning of the water behind.

Straight they go for a point near the stern, placing their snub noses against the towering side of their charge; the liner, maintaining her dignity as best she can, is pushed bodily to one side.

74 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

As a semblance of independence the liner's engines are worked, this one half speed ahead, that one slow astern—but not for long. Soon she is entering the first of the locks towards the open river and obediently the tugs “come to heel,” like well-trained dogs. If the ship took a deep breath she would damage the lock, for there are only inches to spare on either side.

Perhaps at two a.m. the twenty ton anchors with their enormous iron cables will rattle and roar on their way to the mud and ooze of the river bed.

Almost before the mud has settled, four weary stewards with piles of washing arrive alongside in one of the tenders, and with visions of a few hours sleep, set to, with grim determination—for this is Saturday morning.

Early as it is, scores of emigrants are up and about, interested sightseers of the activities of a huge seaport.

There is much to look at, for tenders are arriving alongside frequently, some with a few hundred emigrants, some with mails, others again with baggage, second class now, and still more with stores of all sorts ranging from plovers' eggs to huge coils of rope. Perhaps a few eggs get mixed up with freshly cut flowers, but the Chief Engineer doesn't mind.

Now, if the gymnasium instructor's sand had got into some lubricating oil—Phew! engineers are only human after all.

There is plenty of good will and some grouching, both of which are signs of a good crew.

The doctor hurriedly leaves his breakfast, for a cook has badly burned his hand preparing lunch. The pursers in the midst of their poring over the lists of this, that and the other, mutter naughty swearwords at the vociferous noise of the impatient tugs eager to get their charge alongside the landing stage for the final embarkation of all.

A slight rumble through the ship. Unknowingly to hundreds on board the anchors are up and slowly,

sedately, perhaps would be better, the huge liner moves to the waiting crowds on the stage.

There is a change, a wonderful change. Everyone on deck looks spruce and clean in collars and sparkling gold lace, and the white suits of the stewards stand out vividly against teakwood and polished brass.

As if the clock had waited the liner, and not *vice versa*, the bell rings for the steerage lunch as the first of the saloon passengers step on to the gangway whilst a nearby clock tower booms out the hour of noon, all because the company had advertised that the "ship would be at the stage ready to embark passengers at twelve noon at Saturday the umpteenth instant."

So smoothly was the manœuvre carried out that hundreds of passengers down below were surprised at the sight of buildings close at hand in a chance glimpse through a port-hole.

For the next six hours the work is not perhaps arduous, nevertheless it is very exacting.

A dear old lady wants her writing-case out of her trunk. As it was marked "not wanted on the voyage," perhaps there is, by now, a hundred tons of other baggage on top of it. An American muttering "only five days more" is directed to the bar.

The rails become crowded with passengers. One by one the gangways are lowered. Bugles resound along the decks and vociferously the shout is taken up, "Any more for the shore!"

People are almost tired of saying good-bye, for the most part everyone has become facetious.

Then suddenly the crew become statuesque. The faithful little tugs are already straining at the leash and into this tense moment of expectation there dashes—the last passenger. Amid the laughter of hundreds, willing hands help him. Not a moment too soon. "Four bells" sonorously proclaim six o'clock from the liner's bell, followed by a clock ashore. The last gangway is already down and as if magically cut by a

76 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

huge Alexanderian sword, all the mooring ropes drop simultaneously.

And the young fella' heaves a sigh of relief. The voyage has commenced. Perhaps he'll be able to obtain seven hours' sleep at last—commencing at midnight—but before that he will walk over two miles looking for stowaways, dress for dinner, and stick out his chest, conscious of his pride in being an officer in the "crack" liner of the smartest Merchant Service in the world.



SWEETS BEFORE THE BIRD

"SMOKING Hades!" fiercely ejaculated Poppy, "Christmas morning in a hungry ship, the barometer dancing about somewhere on the kelson, and now that."

"That" was a Liverpool liner which had just passed them making for the Magellan Straits and the smooth water.

She had signalled "A Merry Christmas," and had followed it up with a two-flag hoist, "Pleasant Voyage," which threw the after-guard into a fever of excitement until it was de-coded. Ten minutes were occupied in looking for "Same to You," by which time the liner was occasionally showing her funnels and sticks over the South Atlantic rollers several miles away.

"Lucky devils," muttered Ginger. "They'll be in Punta Arenas to-night."

"Aye! and the festive board groaning under turkeys, plum-puddings and ham and eggs," added Toby in mock melodrama.

"Now, this blankety blank hooker," he continued, "will have a festive board of directors sitting down on the——"

"Lee fore brace," barked the Mate. Then seeing all the four apprentices standing around he said, "That'll do, boys of the watch below."

With muttered exclamations concerning Master and Mates who could not manage flag signals without rousing boys from their sleep, Toby and Ginger went below and the workaday life of a sailing ship off the Horn went on.

78 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

It was after six o'clock and broad daylight. A five days' gale had left everything sodden and indications pointed to an even fiercer blow. Wind and sea were rising fast. There was much work toward on deck and, truth to tell, with barely an hour to breakfast-time, Toby and Ginger were content to listen with enjoyment to the watch on deck shortening sail.

Occasionally a solid green sea would "crump" on deck. The responsive oaths and curses that followed, made the boys in their bunks appreciate their sodden leisure. Their remarks would lead a listener to think that they were callous, but, if they chuckled at a possible prospect of Poppy "getting that one down his neck," it was merely an expression of a vivid contrast between their own conditions and those outside on deck for, within the hour perhaps, the circumstances would be reversed. They naturally drifted to "grousing," which is a true sailorman's prerogative. For weeks two topics dominated the conversation; the meanness of the Old Man and the hungry fare of the ship. In the main their "grousing" consisted of good-natured chaffing, yet occasionally the bitterness showed through.

Said Ginger, "I found out why the Old Man wears carpet slippers all the time. Sea-boots would wear out his decks too quickly."

"Narabbitovit," replied Toby. "Slippers are cheaper than boots."

"Well," went on Ginger, "to save the works he stops his clock when he turns in, and then starts them again when he gets up."

"And he won't use his spectacles for fear he wears them out," retorted Toby.

Ginger sprung a new one. "Did you see him last Sunday doing lots of calculations on paper? Working out the cost of new false teeth against the difference in price between pantiles and fancy biscuits."

"At any rate he does himself well," remarked Toby, "and the Cook told me last night that he won't

allow a plain duff for us to-day, let alone currants, whilst he's having one with candied peel."

Seven bells tinkled faintly from aft, and it was re-echoed sonorously from the big for'ard bell, but the boys made no stir for breakfast. Poppy and Mac dashed in, glad of an excuse to escape the swirling cascades of water along the deck.

"Ho! ho! there! rise and shine," yelled Poppy in an unnecessarily loud voice, for the Mate was close at hand. "Come on there, show-a-leg," he yelled louder than ever.

"Freddy darling," smirked Ginger to Toby. "Show Stentor the door in lieu of a leg, lest I be tempted to break Commandment No. 6."

Hearing the Mate bawling outside the door, Poppy risked his life by another yell and hastily sought refuge from the shower of boots and pots, only to further risk it in encountering a green dollop of the sea on his way to the galley for the "watch below's" breakfast.

The Cook was in a festive mood, enjoying himself by hymn-singing, although his voice broke every time a sea hit the weather galley door, for it was in an exposed part of the ship.

"A Merry Christmas to you, Mr. Poppy, and here's an extra spoonful of molasses in yer burgoo."

Thus the Cook as he dabbed a wooden spoon dripping with dirty brown syrup into the kiddy of porridge.

Poppy stood leaning against the lee galley door. Not a word did he say but his keen eyes noted four slices of raw bacon.

"Gee whiz," he suddenly ejaculated, "did you ever see such a whopping albatross?"

The Cook was of the opinion that it was quite an ordinary one. "Now when I was in the *Arno* in '93, etc., etc.," he went on, but Poppy had gone; so had two slices of bacon.

It is only fair to add that honours were easy.

80 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

The cat enjoyed the rind under the Cook's very nose. Moreover the cat took the blame.

And now to breakfast with Toby and Ginger. By diligent search two spoonfuls of brown sugar were found on the sides of a rusty "billy-can." Toby and Ginger shared this in the "hot and dirty." There is no better name for coffee in a hungry ship. By celerity and ingenuity two more spoonfuls of molasses were rescued from the porridge.

There was no milk for either the coffee or porridge. Well—it was not missed, for there had been none for several months.

The daily allowance of seven small hard sea biscuits per person had been squandered recklessly the previous evening in some dandy funk, but between the three boys there were three and a half remaining. Fortunately, too, the port watch still possessed some marmalade which they generously shared with the watch below. With quip, jest, and grouse, this was the breakfast on Christmas morning.

Yet something seemed to hang fire. The boys were not enjoying their breakfast as was their wont. Poppy kept staring aft.

From time to time the others would share the mysterious vigil. Mac was to be seen hanging around at the break of the poop.

The watchers grew tense as he engaged the Mate in conversation. The tension rose as Mac led the Mate to the hencoop and together they peered within.

The latter went inside the saloon whilst Mac with the dogged determination of his race waited by the door. Presently the Mate returned accompanied by the steward, very anxious of mien. All three stared at the hencoop for several seconds, which seemed like an eternity to the watchers in the half-deck. The sudden advent of a sea caught the group round the coop, and they scattered, each in the manner of their temperament. The Mate, old and cautious, grabbed the lee lashings of the hencoop and hung on until driven to safety on the

poop by the "weather" roll and wash of a mobile deckload of two hundred tons.

Mac, youthful and agile, scrambled atop the coop, grinning the while at the steward who was concerned in keeping his slippers dry, and who finished up by floating to the main hatch and back along the lee rail in five feet of water until pulled to safety by Mac. Mac may have been Scotch but he was also an opportunist.

"By Jingo! Steward," said Mac between splutters, "that was a close shave for you. You were just floating over the rail when I grabbed you in time." And the steward, thoroughly scared, believed every word as the young Scotsman solicitously escorted him to his cabin.

"By the way, steward," added Mac as the steward commenced changing, "about that dead hen? Don't throw it overboard like you did the other one last week. Let us boys have it."

"But I don't know what it died from," replied the other.

"Oh! That's all right," was Mac's ready retort, "you won't have to eat it."

Mac had his reward, and cheaply too, thought the steward. Within two minutes the fowl was being lovingly admired by the boys in the half-deck.

"Better get rid of the head as soon as possible," whispered Poppy, "you can see the marks of the sail needle as plain as anything." Which being done, removed the only clue of some clever and resourceful work of two boys with the aid of a large needle tied on the end of a stick.

Four boys lustily sang a fervent doxology.

*"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Send one continuous, 'Watch below.'
One meal a day and that all day,
We'll be content with Owner's pay."*

82 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

An unnecessarily prolonged "Amen" prompted an angry Mate to bawl out that the blankety-phiz-bang boys of the watch below could wash their own faces and stop that highly coloured caterwauling as it wasn't a gramophone factory.

After a suitable and respectable silence, during which time Poppy hurriedly dashed out on deck, made a quick run round the deck-house and dived into the half-deck again, Mac broke the silence by expressing the wish of all.

"If only we could manage a duff."

And though it was the unspoken thought of all he was promptly told to shut up, or at least words to that effect.

So the hours passed. Seas increased and a heavy sou'wester gale toyed with the ship as though she were some piece of flotsam. There was consolation in the fact that it was summertime, and thus Arctic conditions did not add to their misery.

As it was, the Cook flatly refused to let the boys use the galley for cooking their fowl, and they, on their part, would not trust him to do it.

Perforce then, they dined off a meagre portion of tinned meat and dry biscuits. They had to deny themselves a drink of water for the weather was so bad that no water was likely to be issued on that day.

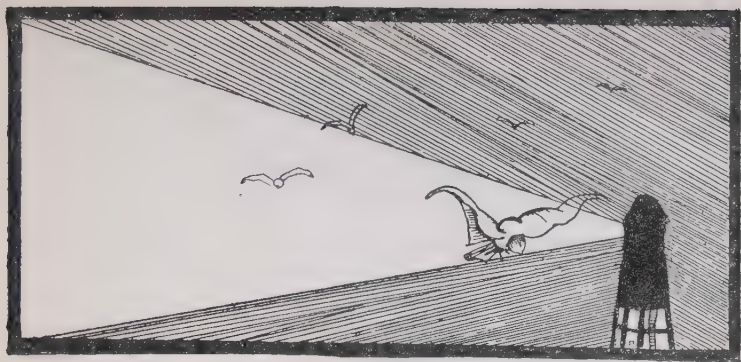
By quarter-past twelve, Poppy and Mac were hastily preparing to turn in, when the usual comedy of the steward traversing the decks in bad weather presented itself.

He stepped as daintily as a kitten, no matter how often he got wet. Added to this he carried a huge basket which he clutched tightly, for he once laid a basket on a rail while he jumped to safety and had the satisfaction of seeing it float over the lee rail.

The ship took an ominous roll and he ran for it, but was just too late, and, for the second time that day he was rescued, basket and all, from the lee scuppers by one of the boys. The same sea, however, had been a

heavy one, and had smashed in the weather door of the galley, carrying everything before it, including the Cook and all his utensils through the lee door into the scuppers. Hastily all hands helped to retrieve what was possible, but the Captain's dinner was utterly spoiled—well perhaps not altogether, for four hungry boys enjoyed a plum-pudding made with candied peel.

It was true, of course, that the outside tasted slightly of sea-water, still that was a minor affair, seeing that a roasted fowl basted by two rashers, followed at midnight.



“WEAR SHIP!”

WITH the steady decline of the “windjammer,” it may not be out of place to give a broad description of the above manœuvre.

The operation consists of turning the ship round in order to bring the wind from one side to the other when it is adverse, and is only resorted to when the weather is too bad to execute the ordinary “tack ship.”

In the former case the ship is turned away from the wind and in the latter, towards it, and consequently “wearing ship” is an operation in which a lot of ground is lost.

Half a century ago when the “windjammers” were in their heyday, possessing the best of rigging and being well manned, “wearing ship” was unknown except in extremely bad weather, but with the advent of competition from “steam,” crews were diminished, labour-saving devices were introduced and spars, masts, and rigging suffered from the economies of hard headed business men, so that if a Captain wished to realize his ambition to be a farmer he had to be cautious.

Suddenly a voice bawls, “Come on, you sojers! Wear ship at eight bells.”

Being very unconvinced, a cold, wet, clammy hand on the cheek of the sleeper brings reality.

The lamp brightens up, suddenly revealing a room some eighteen feet by nine. The furniture is simple, very simple. In fact if a board on hinges attached to the bulkhead and supported by an iron bar, which does duty for a table, be excluded, there is none except six bunks in pairs, upper and lower, and six sea-chests ranged round the sides, leaving a walking space eighteen inches wide.

The glistening oilskins of the bawler make the watch below feel cold and there is a smuggling into the grey blankets, but the clammy hand is inexorable.

Thr-r-r-u-u-m-p! A huge sea strikes the side of the house.

"How'd you like that one down the back of your neck?"

A shudder is the only answer.

With eyes gradually opening in the stuffy atmosphere, for every possible egress is closed to keep out wind and weather, Price involuntarily stretches out his hands only to sharply draw back one of them on encountering the quarter inch of ice on the iron bulk head, and just then a mysterious clutching hand deposits a billy-can steaming hot on the aforesaid table. This is the "hot and dirty," otherwise coffee. Another glistening oilclad figure precipitates himself suddenly into the room, the door bangs to furiously, just as another thru-u-m-p shakes the ship from stem to stern. None may realize it, but he risked his life to save the "hot and dirty."

Dominating every sound is the wind in the rigging, now rising to a shrill eerie whistling as of exultant demons of the tempest; now falling to a low moaning and sighing, the every essence of despair, and through it all the music of splashing, running, tumbling waters, but there'll be no ear for this, the grandest most awful music in nature; afterwards perhaps—

Heavy footfalls over-head mingle with vague

roaring voices as the watch on deck are preparing by coiling down the various ropes that in a few minutes' time will be whirling and rattling through blocks and pulleys as the huge and ghostly spars swing round. The customary places for ropes are useless in this weather and so they are coiled and flaked down in places as remote as possible from the thunderous seas; across life-boats, on the life-lines, on tops of the various houses, and on the sacred poop itself, for should a rope not run freely at the critical moment, well, a ship is long overdue.

“ What's the weather like, Toby? ” Guided by the sound, Price's nose can be seen nestling amongst some blankets in a bottom bunk.

“ Oh! Tubby! Simply delightful,” is the reply of the “ hot and dirty ” knight. “ The ‘ Old Man ’ gave a ball to the starboard watch at four bells. After the ball I was picking daisies on the fore tops'l yard for an hour, and I got quite sunburnt round the——”

“ Toby! Come on and get the fore braces coiled down. The watch below can wash their faces by themselves.”

At the voice of the First Mate outside the after door, there is immediate activity. Toby dives through the other door.

Brodie lets out a yell of, “ Come on, you sons, you know what sons I mean! ”

He of the nose, literally jumps into his trousers, stiff with the crusted salt of sea-water while Ginger in his innocence places his feet in eighteen inches of swirling icy cold sea-water.

It doesn't matter much, for his bedclothes are wet, likewise his underclothing, the only dry thing being the wick and lamp-glass.

With a belt to hold up his trousers, thick long stockings on the outside of his trousers, a thick fisherman's jersey follows and then sea-boots; the least damp of all these is probably the jersey. Over all comes a pea-jacket. Now follows the real dressing, a careful

and painstaking, but nevertheless essential job. Oil-skin trousers require to be watertight, for it will be necessary to stand in rushing water above the waist. The bottoms of the oilskins are pulled well up the leg and spunyarn tied tightly round about six inches from the bottom. Loose teased oakum is then inserted below the tie between the sea-boot and the oilskin, followed by more spunyarn tied tightly below the oakum. He is now watertight up to the waist. A really large muffler is wrapped several times round the neck and, if sufficient remains, round the chest and body.

Then the oilskin coat, quite short, is put on. With so many clothes underneath, the coat fits tightly. More spunyarn is tied tightly round the wrists of the coat and Ginger stands practically watertight from the neck downwards. The well-dressed sailor will have a fore and aft strap or roband from the tail of the coat between the legs to the front, fastened to the belt which holds the indispensable sheath knife.

A sou'wester, a last gulp of the coffee, followed by a mouthful of ship's biscuit and marmalade just as the sonorous notes from the fo'c'sle bell proclaims eight bells, then he steps over the thirty inch weather board into the night.

Whilst they were dressing the half-deck it would be just as well to describe the happenings on the poop in the few minutes prior to midnight.

Sheltering behind the "dodger," a six-feet square of canvas held in place, not so much by fastenings as by the force of wind pressure against the mizzen rigging, the first impression one obtains is of a yellow faint halo of light astern, and then vaguely will be seen the helmsmen, for in this weather there will be two, one either side of the six feet wheel. The light is showing from the binnacle which holds the compass. Despite the heavy fourfold tackles on either side of the tiller the wheel kicks furiously. A glowing cigar-end indicates the position of the Captain, *who is shod*

in carpet slippers. The First Mate is standing close alongside the binnacle and like the Captain, he is eagerly watching for a favourable opportunity in wind and weather of carrying out the first of two critical moves.

The last efforts of a heavy squall are passing over. Down to leeward the huge black mass of cloud, sleet, and hail is rapidly growing smaller. The wind having shifted a couple of points brings the heavy seas nearly abeam. Conditions are favourable, but the opportunity has not yet arrived.

A hundred and fifty tons of water crashes aboard in a foaming torrential avalanche, the same sea that nearly diluted the coffee.

“What do you say, sir?” bawls the Mate.

The Captain hears the voice only, but intuitively gathers the import.

“Stand by the crojack braces!” is his reply.

The watch on deck, unnoticed until now, spring from their varying shelters behind companionways and wheelbox and man the ropes that will swing the mizzen yard.

Another sea, smaller than the first, breaks aboard, and still another with twenty seconds interval. The proverbial three rollers have passed. Now is the opportunity.

“Stand by the main braces!” The order is bawled from one to the other to where a number of the crew are standing outside the half-deck door.

As yet, being on the lee side, there is shelter from the force of gale. Dark figures, which show up against the white foam of the hurricane-lashed waves, are moving to and fro. They are of two kinds, those who move with directness of purpose, for they are used to the darkness, and those who are groping and uncertain, their eyes still blinded by the light of fo’c’sle, half-deck or cabin.

A few yards away is the life-line. Cautiously some

make for it but an ominous roll of the ship decides them to make a dash.

Crash! Bru-u-u-m-m-p! A solid green sea rolls aboard but the main hatch breaks the force of it. Gulping and spluttering Ginger gives vent to his feelings. The old *Brenfield*, not for the first time, is called a dirty cow.

With the subsidence of the water which is rapidly pouring through the large ports cut in the bulwarks there is a movement amongst the dark figures around. Every man for himself, they make their way aft by life-line, rail, or rigging. Most of them are still on the lee side, but sailormen prefer the weather side instinctively, probably because it is higher or perhaps because there is more chance to grab something before reaching the lee rail.

Gradually a long line of dark figures assembles at the weather main brace, a rope which controls the end of the main yard. The Mate and two hands are at the lee main brace. Close above on the poop is the Captain, an outsize in men with a voice that prompted the idea of the "Stentorphone."

Here alongside the main brace are assembled rather more than half the crew, the remainder being on the poop to attend the mizzen braces. At any moment a heavy sea may break aboard. If so, being on weather side of the main deck, it would be as well to be ready to grab something with the *hands* and not rely on the feet.

Down to leeward, sharply silhouetted against the frothy whiteness of the swirling water, four feet deep, can be seen the Mate. Though it may not have been heard the Captain has bawled the order, "Up with your helm!" The ship is now being turned away from the wind. Suddenly overhead the staccato command "Haul away men!" is the signal for the Mate to ease off the lee braces, which now permits of the yards being pulled round. It is hard work at first but the Bos'n's clear resonant voice "in song"

bends each shiny oilskin-clad back in unison. This song, by the way, is not the usual sea chantey, but is just a series of any kind of vocal sounds being stressed at intervals as signals to pull. Amongst sailormen more than any others, is the adage “Unity is strength” appreciated. As the yards come round so the effort required becomes less, and soon the main and mizzen yards are pointed to the wind whilst the foreyards are now receiving the full force of the gale. With this leverage on the for’ard end the ship is swinging rapidly off without gathering too much headway.

Thus they carry on; as the wind and sea come astern the main and mizzen yards are kept following them until they are on the other quarter. By this time the main and mizzen yards are braced up and the ship’s running before the wind.

“Port fore brace!”

There is now a scurrying forward in comparative safety for the ship is on an even keel. The next few minutes are pandemonium let loose. *Everyone* sings, each his own “song.” All the forward braces are manned by the whole crew.

With a cheery “Haul away, port side!” the Mate and his helpers let go the starboard braces, and the yards now released suddenly and helped by the wind, swing round to the tramping of ten-pound sea-boots, the rattle and roar of blocks, creaking of goose necks, chains, and the mixed chorus of songs, in which even the Reverend Passon Sambo, the greasy Cook, joins. Those speedy of foot run with the ends of the ropes right forward, others stand by to “catch a turn” when necessary, for although the ropes are slack and only need hauling in, yet a roll of the ship will send the yards, tons in weight, in a vicious backward swing, breaking legs and arms of those who may be unfortunate enough to get entangled in the confusion of rapidly writhing ropes. In this operation, speed and the best of speed is essential, for every minute lost

92 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

means so much more leeway to make up as the ship is now running before the wind. Soon, however, all the slack of each brace is taken up and a more concentrated effort is needed to secure firmly the yards in place, this being done on both sides of the ship.

"All hands off the main deck." This order is obeyed with alacrity and with reason, for the completion of turning the ship round is about to be carried out and in doing so there will be a period of danger when the heavy beam seas will sweep right across the main deck. It is on such occasions as these that ships founder, for the unlucky impact of hundreds of tons of water will stave in decks and hatchways as if they were matchwood. As before, the Captain will wait and watch for an opportunity and close attention will be given to the helmsmen.

The majority of the crew take themselves under the fo'c'sle head and some of the "shell backs" will be nursing the ends of one or two braces to save themselves a lot of unnecessary labour later on. From this point of vantage, too, the rollers will be seen sweeping from the quarter in an ever threatening procession, but at each arrival the stern rises, proudly it seems, only to plunk back in the succeeding valley with a thrump that shakes the old *Brenfield* from stem to stern. Meanwhile the helm and seas are having effect, for now the seas are gradually becoming more parallel to the ship, the rising of the stern is less and she rolls more heavily.

A monster wave is approaching, and horror of horrors, she is rolling towards it, which will expose the whole of the decks to the incoming mass of water travelling at the rate of about thirty miles an hour. Seconds seem like minutes. Did one but know the factors one might try and calculate chances, for the roll occupies about fifteen seconds from one side to the other, but at moments like this, fascination holds tight. Still she rolls, listing more and more towards it, the wave nearer and nearer. Although the roll seems

finished there is no tendency apparent of the ship rolling back—and the wave is nearer still. Nor yet does the backward roll commence. The foot of the roller has reached the quarter. One looks up at an eighty feet slope of water and wonders what *will* happen. The height of the wave from crest to trough is nearer forty than thirty feet. Then perhaps for the first time in life one realizes fear, the real fear of death. As if to accentuate this the wind in the rigging has died down to a low moaning and sighing quite in accord with the emotions.

“Vats der matter, you cow! Rise up!” The voice of Swansen, a big Swede, breaks in upon it all. Bystanders are grateful, for it brings home to them that they are not alone, the one helpful antidote to fear.

Almost at the same time that the forefoot of the roller begins to pour aboard, sweeping forward along the bulwarks with a roar, so the ship seems to shake off her sluggishness and the quarter rises in the air in time enough perhaps to prevent the full force of the sea hitting the deck fair and square, but not quick enough to prevent a huge sea roaring forward along the decks.

So quickly does everything happen that instinct prompts rather than thought, and those who are nimble find themselves a dozen feet up the chain topsail sheets, which are rigid iron bars. This for a moment only, for they drop back amongst the swirling foam, shaken off the chains as the sails flap in the heavy roll of the ship. Wildly clutching, gasping and spluttering they wonder where they are. For a moment the dread thought strikes. “Overboard?” The feet hit something soft and the ribs thud on something hard. The former is Olson and he is not pleased at having his feet knocked from under him. The hard object is the end of a spare spar along the deck. By the time one is holding tight with two hands Olson has gone ten yards away. Having travelled eighty feet already one

94 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

is in no mind to follow him, besides he'll probably come back.

A blurred vision of a dark mass with white edges and one is off again, the jetsam of another sea, but this time fortunately one hits the life-line and desperately with legs and arms clings tight. Someone facetiously bawls in the ear to ask if there are any coco-nuts up there. With a humorous smirk one climbs down.

Toby says that she came round well, only two heavy seas. There is a groan at the "only."

She is round all right, for the awful shrieking and whistling which subsided when the wind was astern has commenced again with seemingly increased fury. All hands give a final tightening of the weather braces, and as is usual, the one or two lucky and dry people get a nice little "green one" all to themselves.

"Splice the main brace!" and right welcome indeed is the tot of rum which follows.

The next order is almost as welcome, "Relieve the wheel and look-out!" for the watch below can go to their well-earned rest.

A good hour's work, however, remains for the watch on deck, for they have to clear up the ropes and strange are the pranks which have been played on the rope ends by the swirling water on the deck. There will be some twenty ropes varying in length from three hundred and sixty feet down to sixty feet.

Not being a "soldier" (a slacker) one will tackle the main brace. The task looks appallingly impossible of solution; for one thing it has to be found. In company with several other ropes, it has been sucked through two or three scupperholes some six inches in diameter, washed back aboard over the bulwarks, through ports, round masts and possibly in and out the fore and mizzen rigging. A heavy squall of sleet and hail does not improve the warmth of bare hands.

Three quarters of an hour shows some resulting order out of chaos even though three or four seas have

partially undone the labour. Soon the ropes are “triced up” in the rigging out of harm’s way. Somewhat weary and with visions of “hot and dirty” one waddles towards the half-deck.

“Four hands secure the main lower to’gan’s’l.” The lynx-eyed Second Mate has spotted a sail breaking loose, or perhaps heard it. “Four hands, indeed,” mutters a malcontent. This is all that is available. Being nearly two a.m. three men are getting ready to relieve the wheel and look-out. The order is obeyed quickly, for in such circumstances minor troubles quickly develop into major ones which would require all hands.

Thankful that the snow has stopped and with the wonderful glow of circulation in burning hands after messing around in cold water, one vents a good “grouse” on a frozen sail as hard as mahogany, beating it with fist and elbow in sheer ecstasy of delight, the first pleasurable feeling since midnight.

Being in the mood one can look down on the wonderful sight, the seas in never ending procession, the foaming white curled arrow as the bows crash down on a sea, the swirling circling eddies astern, and more heartening than these, a star peeps out ahead, the first for a fortnight.

“Lucky devils,” bawls Price down the wind from the yardarm perch. Wondering whether he is referring to the watch below or whom, the leeward roll is awaited the better to talk. As the hundred and fifty feet swing through the air commences, one turns but he anticipates and points away to windward where close at hand is a large five-masted ship crashing through the seas before the gale with nearly every sail set. By her black and white chequered sides she is recognized as the *Nord*, a Frenchman, for there are few of this rig. In two months perhaps she’ll be home, while the *Brenfield* is outward bound. A very faint cheer comes down the wind, for the joys and sorrows of the sea know no flag. In five minutes she is out of sight, Price

96 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

and Ginger are contentedly munching biscuit and marmalade.

If a "farmer," i.e., free from wheel or look-out during the watch, an opportunity is snatched for a quiet nap on a sea-chest, such a nap as cannot be enjoyed by people in the downiest of feather beds if they have never experienced wearing ship.



SATURDAY TO MONDAY

SEAMEN, on account of the exacting nature of their duties, are creatures of habit bred by long experience.

A very small amount of analysis of the usual weekend on board ship will reveal that it is primarily devoted to self-preservation which is the first law of nature.

That is why, at six o'clock on Saturday morning, under the superintendence of the carpenter, the top-masts and top gallant-masts are greased down because perhaps generations ago a sliding parrel stuck fast and endangered some ship.

In any case, well preserved spars are less dangerous to the safety of those on board.

And so strong is the habit engrained that the same procedure is gone through on board large steamers which know not parrels in their rigging and whose masts are merely a means of displaying flags.

Machinery not being infallible, who knows but what that same spar may yet find use as a jury-rudder or a sea-anchor?

However much "chips" may have skimped the sounding of water in the ship's hold during the week, such is not the case on Saturday.

On that day, too, there is a good "clean-up" and "wash down," for whatever the relation between

cleanliness and godliness, the former spells good health; and there is never a spare man in a ship's crew in a moment of danger, notwithstanding patent winches and gadgets by which ship owners reduce crews in two's and threes.

When thousands of fellow-townsmen are wending their way to football matches, the sailorman is washing clothes, greasing sea-boots, or putting on a fresh coat of oil on his oilskins.

If there is a likelihood of bad weather, hatch combings and tarpaulins will be closely examined. Whatever the meteorological prospect, the decks will be thoroughly well washed down, for a stray wisp of rope-yarn may stop a running rope at a critical moment.

Finally, running gear will be coiled down, and then the sailor is free for his own pleasures.

The younger members will indulge in trials and feats of strength. The older ones will make personal preparations for bad weather. Robands (a two-foot plaiting of rope-yarn) will be made for later use in tying sleeves and legs of oilskins. Perhaps a sheath knife has to be sharpened or a new lanyard placed on a marling spike.

And then to play.

Seamen are never idle. Few are heavy readers. Why should they be, for the average sailorman can cram as much life in one hectic week as most people who work on shore do in a decade.

Most of them have a hobby, and lucky is the ship where the devotees of music are few, unless, as is sometimes the case, some bright spirit has the inspiration to weld them into a "Foo-foo" band, thereby killing several birds with one stone.

Then it is that violins, biscuit tins, banjos, cornets, mouth organs, combs and paper, jews' harps, and clacking tablespoons can be gathered together in one corner to provide dance music and leave the poker and cribbage players to carry on.

Tucked away in an old corner will be a man engaged

in making that ever fresh miracle to the uninitiated, a model of a sailing ship inside a pint bottle. It matters not that the ship is sailing perilously close to rocks, a lighthouse, and a row of cottages complete. Likewise it would tax the maker's memory to recollect in what part of the world he saw waves of the colour and shape he is modelling. Perhaps, long after he has "signed on" for his last voyage, people will ask how did it get inside.

Something must be said about ships' pets and mascots.

An unkind person once said that monkeys, parrots and cats had learnt their bad habits from sailors.

Monkeys, it is true, are credited with a fondness for chewing tobacco, whilst some parrots *do* swear horribly, and there is no doubt of the lateness of hours kept by some domesticated felines.

Nevertheless, Jack when afloat invariably contrives to have some sort of a pet notwithstanding the fact that most of the big shipping lines have strict rules which prohibit this.

In some mysterious manner, cats and dogs find their way aboard to be the mascot of some fo'c'sle or cabin.

Sailormen, in their respective classes, are jealous of their mascots, and it is not surprising that the animals become very much attached to their masters and in a short time readily acquire a knowledge of ship's routine.

Not only that, but if "Diggles," who in appearance resembles a fox terrier, and who belongs to the starboard watch of seamen, should wander into the daymen's mess he'll probably lose a piece of his ear, for "Buller," a one-eyed tom cat, is the essence of pugnaciousness and, to the mess, he is the embodiment of all the virtues.

Should the aforesaid "Buller" wander down the "Glory-hole" and appropriate a kipper belonging to a steward then the daymen would back him up to a man.

As they would point out, kippers are too weak to look after themselves, and besides, "Buller" is fastidious. He wouldn't eat a kipper.

Revenge on the "Tom" is next to impossible, for

100 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

he will only rub trousers with daymen ; seamen, firemen and stewards being his deadly enemies.

Then there is " Rags " of the " Glory-hole." Nothing ever appeared in any dog show like him. In fact, were it not for his bark he might be mistaken for a jazz coloured Persian cat. The possessor of a remarkably keen sense of smell he can differentiate between the " shore going " shirt of Nobbie Clark, a fo'c'sle hand, and an identically similar one belonging to Dusty Brown, a steerage steward. Be it noted that the latter is a friend. " Rags " derived his name from the state of " enemy " shirts after he had finished with them.

Birds are not unknown although perhaps when some songster draws the attention of authority, the owner's explanation that " he found it on the boat-deck, sir, beat to the wide, sir," will be received with a grin, for birds landing on a ship in mid-ocean seldom bring a cage with them. Furthermore, the possession of bird-seed is not so easy of explanation.

Strange as it may seem, the favourite pet of sailors is a " Dennis." For decades, pigs have been known by this name, but it is only in sailing ships and a few tramps where they are still to be found. The ice-chest and refrigerating plant have " killed their pig " in the bigger steamers and the liners.

It is seldom that a crew does not contain an Irishman who at once constitutes himself the guardian angel of his compatriot, for, say what you will, pigs that follow the sea are Irish even though they be born in South America of Burmese parents.

And the delightful ways and mannerisms of a porker are wonderful to behold. Not a bit fastidious, he eats coal and coke and canvas with equal partiality, which is sometimes annoying, for sailors make slippers out of canvas and the supplies of coal on " windbags " are very limited. He has his uses, however, for he loves to have paint brushes rubbed on his back, and a Fellow of the Royal Zoological Society suddenly dropped on the deck of a sailing ship in mid-ocean would open his eyes

in amazement at beholding a jazz coloured zebra-hyena busily engaged in chewing flakes of iron rust in the vicinity of some sailormen engaged in chipping iron off the bulwarks.

Dennis takes life easily except when "Jacko," a monkey that knows every trick of man as well as those usual to his tribe, takes it into his head to enjoy a gallop round the decks, which he does by hanging on to Dennis's tail, much to the vociferous annoyance of two roosters, seven hens, and a few ducks.

The roosters have quite enough troubles in life, for "Rollo" the cat, with an alleged Manx nationality, is continually stalking them when he is not being pursued by Jacko.

How he lost his tail is a sulphurous matter with the crew, for the ship was nearly lost thereby. Blocks and pulleys are made for ropes only, and not cats' tails. After all, the safety of the ship is more important than the nationality of a cat.

Besides, that was the reason that Jacko turned his attention to Dennis as a mount.

Then there is the tale of "Rats." She was a Brazilian marmozet, a wonderful fluffy ball of affection to her master. She would whimper and cry in the dark until her tiny hand would clutch his ear or neck, after which she would contentedly go to sleep. About the size of a cat when dry, but only as big as a rat in her bath, she endeared herself to all on board. Very early on the voyage she found her way into the saloon, perched herself on the edge of the sugar bowl, and was industriously nibbling a sugar lump in both hands when the Captain's wife suddenly appeared, and with a scream, as suddenly departed, but the two ladies got on well together, for Rats was a thorough lady from her bushy eyebrows to the tips of her dainty little finger-nails.

Her very size was the cause of her untimely end, for she fell in the washbowl and was unable to get out.

Some of Jack's pets are not so affectionate, which

102 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

perhaps is as well, for one sailorman risked his life, when the ship caught fire, to rescue his pal of nearly a year—a deadly poisonous tarantula.

Maybe the tarantula had some gratitude towards his master for he had lost his two for'ard starboard legs. Anyway, some pet cockroaches belonging to shipmates disappeared. And Jack had to stand by his six legged spider to save his life.

But the very best pets of all are left at home when the seaman signs on. No doubt he carries photographs with him. Thus it is that each week-end the seaman will spare an hour diving into his sea-chest which is a wonderfully romantic index to the owner's character.

A wooden chest of any kind is an object of curiosity and wonder; for such things belong to a bygone age.

Who has not experienced a thrill, on first being allowed to peep in one for the first time? If the plain household chest holds such thrills, how much more so must the peculiarly shaped seaman's chest excite the beholder?

There is magic in the handles, for they are of rope; in shape somewhat like elongated horseshoes. The ends of the shoe, or rather, as the seaman calls it, the shackle, are formed into a hole. Through these holes, one on either side of a wedge-shaped block of wood, is an iron bar. On each end of the bar there are intricate "crown knots" of a sort that puzzle even the ingeniousness of a boy scout. Laboriously wrought by a cunning hand are the cross pointings, the turk's-heads, the crowns, the wall-knots, and the various sennets.

Perhaps, years ago, the handles were painted in a variety of weird and vivid colours, dear to the eye of a sailor; for he lives amongst the vivid and virile colours of nature. He has seen the wonderful topaz of the Andes fifty miles away. He has gazed into the impenetrable sapphire depths of some deep mountain-girt strait. In a shallow emerald bay he has marvelled at the wonders of the sea-bed. He has stilled his raised voice before the majesty of a flaming sunset. Hope

renewed itself again in his breast with the pink rosy dawn of peace on the heels of a gale. All these things and more he expresses in a crude way on his chest.

Every voyage he devotes a small part of his leisure time to its decoration. The shape and size are peculiar to the sea.

The most noticeable thing is the smallness of the chest, with sides and ends which converge towards the lid—and there is a reason. In the days before the Merchant Shipping Acts made such stringent rules for the safety of those at sea the seaman's chest was meant to act as a life-saving raft and to float upwards.

Around the bottom there is a three inch skirting board with the object of raising the bottom of the chest from possible wet decks, although there is frequently a foot or so of swirling sea-water in the fo'c'sle during heavy weather. The sides, above the black skirting board, are usually painted a bright green with possibly a couple of national flags painted on the front. A well fitting beautifully worked cotton canvas cover surmounts the lid. The edge is tasselled and fringed sufficient to satisfy the most exacting demands of the village mothers' meeting. Drawn threadwork and perhaps a worked monogram complete the whole. And horny hands have scoured it a dazzling snowy white.

No key is needed to unlock the chest. Of a truth, it would be a bigger insult for the owner to lock it than for a stranger to look inside.

Neatly arranged inside are the tools of his calling, and as is to be expected, they are concerned with the manipulation of rope and canvas. The inevitable palm and needles are there, as is also a canvas bag with a variety of twines, beeswax, and tallow, together with some of the smaller types of tarred cordage; a bag that would delight the heart of the ardent amateur yachtsman, for in the bottom are a number of small blocks and pieces of wire of many kinds, and a pricker or small marlin spike on a handle. Some small serving mallets

104 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

and a fid or two occupy a prominent place. Finally there are one or two *steel* marling spikes, for those of the ship's store variety are merely iron. Alone, of all his tools, the marling spikes bear evidences of elaborate workmanship in the fashioning of the lanyard.

You will search in vain for personal clothing, except perhaps for boots, for such things will be found under the pillow or mattress. Maybe a suit and a shoregoing overcoat will be wrapped up alongside the boots.

Two side drawers about the size of boot boxes are fitted close under the lid at either end of the box.

In them will be found odds and ends of unimportant correspondence and souvenirs from various parts of the world, each of which has a story unto itself.

Keep close to him a day or so before entering a port.

He will empty one of the drawers and then he'll slide *the bottom of the drawer* to one side, revealing a secret space—very narrow—extending to the bottom of the chest.

Perhaps he'll keep a pound or two of tobacco there, for customs officials of all nations are so inquisitive.

Thus it is that some portion of the seaman's chest will remain a sanctuary.

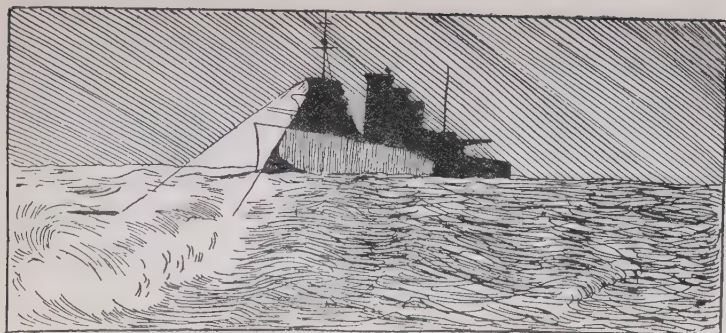
Perhaps in the passing of time and in the stress and hustle of modern conditions, the kit-bag and the trunk will ultimately oust his well-beloved chest, yet one thing will be retained—his ditty-box—for, if his chest is a sanctuary, then the ditty-box is his holy of holies.

In it are contained the treasures of childhood and mother, with perhaps a cherished letter or two. Maybe there will be a blue ribboned medal, a medal to be worn on the right breast, denoting bravery at sea in peace or war. But wild horses or the potent fumes of wine will not compel him to exhibit it or tell the story of it.

There are other things too, which have no concern with anyone, links with the far reaching past, rocks of

strength in the hour of trial and temptation, beacons in moments of despair, all this and more.

Who will deny that that hour's reverie with the treasures of the ditty-box is an act of self-preservation just as much as the rest of the week-end routine at sea?



THE NELSON TOUCH

SOME men go to sea because they are fools. If they stop at sea they are blankety fools. These are the sentiments of all true sailormen.

Why Ginger went to sea is known only to a few people. To everyone else he was the biggest fool of the lot, for he insisted on liking the sea to the end, coupled with which was his quixotic grip on the Nelson Touch; a something which he was unable to explain but which he felt intensely.

A few guffaws and scornful laughs closed his lips for ever to shipmates, but one or two knew of his trait, desire, ambition, or what you will.

Because there are many Gingers at sea he shall be nameless.

And this Nelson Touch business; he himself related how he acquired it. A mere baby he was; proud to be called a little man in his first pair of trousers. At the very fount of learning—his mother's knee—he first heard the stories of Nelson, and thereafter Nelson was his hero and his pattern.

True to his pattern he fought three boys at kindergarten, each bigger than himself. Added to his resulting minor injuries were the conduct remarks in the term report, "a somewhat vicious and pugnacious boy."

108 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

He essayed the rescue of his pet dog, but the dog wagged his tail on the banks of the pond as he himself was rescued with difficulty, and his heart was broken in puzzlement at the anger of his nurse for spoiling a nice suit.

No odds were too great, but always he was beaten. Had anyone really understood him and his dream he might have been reminded that Nelson had a big heart, a big courage, and also was a genius. It was not given to many to possess all three or even two of these. But no one was there, and Ginger went on pitting himself against odds.

When the odds were mortal, Ginger gained some satisfaction from the knowledge that at least some fellow beings knew his worth and spirit.

Not all his tilts were at windmills, yet such was the irony of the circumstances surrounding the one really successful effort of his life that he was compelled to maintain the utmost secrecy regarding it.

It was in this manner. He wanted to go to sea, for it was only there that he felt he could consummate his lifelong self-imposed task.

From a medical point of view he failed lamentably to secure entry to the Navy. Bearing in mind Nelson's blind eye at the Battle of Copenhagen, he prepared for a medical examination at home. In this he was assisted by confiding some of his boyish ambitions to the family doctor. Thus he passed the examination with flying colours, and so to sea he went—but into the Merchant Service as an apprentice in a sailing ship.

To the boys in the half-deck of the barque *Brenfield*, Ginger was about as strong as a shrimp. Nevertheless they liked him. He confided in them of his aspirations. He tried to convey his idea of the Nelson Touch, and boylike, they laughed at him to scorn. Within the month he attempted practical proof.

On a day in the flying-fish latitudes just north of the line, at a time when he had learnt something of

sailorizing, he resented some disparaging remarks of Swansen. The reference to his mother's apron strings was but a minor part of the conversation. The fact of the remarks being made in the presence of the other boys required instant action. Swansen was six feet four inches, and Ginger was hardly equal in weight to one of Swansen's huge legs.

Swansen laughed when Ginger solemnly gave him a chance to withdraw his remarks, and Ginger's eyes blazed at the threat of being spanked across the big Swede's knee. For nearly half a minute Ginger rained blows on Swansen's head from his advantageous position of clinging behind the big sailor with one arm tightly encircling the twenty-two inch neck.

A number of the crew gathered round to see the joke, but Swansen became uncomfortable at not being able to rid himself of his tiny aggressor.

He solved the question by dipping his head and shoulders, including Ginger, in the wash deck tub which was full of water. Roars of laughter greeted this neat impromptu manoeuvre, but there followed a deadly silence as Ginger sprang up at Swansen again, who, caught unawares, overbalanced backwards.

Then the Captain appeared, wrathful and indignant that an apprentice should so far forget himself as to fight with a fo'c'sle hand, and Ginger was unceremoniously bundled aft. Captain Learmont, a strict disciplinarian, but withal extremely good-natured, held strict views about apprentices. One was that they should not mix with the fo'c'sle hands any more than was necessary.

As a punishment Ginger was ordered up to the royal yard for the rest of his watch below. Swansen was a good sailor and well liked by all on board, and Ginger's attack upon him therefore met with scant courtesy.

In the years that followed, Ginger well nigh despaired of ever meeting with due recognition of his

110 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

attempts to live up to the circumstances of England's sea hero.

So it was till Ginger, in common with all sailors, welcomed the challenge thrown out by the Germans in that memorable month of August. At last the time had arrived when every hour would bring forth its opportunity.

But the heart sank within him as the months went by. Because of his physical defects he had been unable to join the big liner companies. The same hindrances prevented him being accepted for the Reserve, and he remained in a humble tramp steamer, an obscure but worthy unit of his country's vital transport organization.

Quickly he rose to Mate and as quickly he obtained command. The weeks stretched to months with the opportunity he sought always below the rim of the horizon. His crews invariably left him, at the first opportunity, and joined the Navy where the discipline was less irksome. Here and there a man stuck to him until in 1918 he had nearly a score of his crew who believed in him.

Then came the great moment of his life. The Admiralty fitted a twelve-pounder gun on his poop for anti-submarine warfare, and he received a short instructional course in gunnery. Never had there been such an apt pupil. He had been prepared for this for years. Many of his old shipmates in the Royal Navy Reserve had been sought out from time to time.

Consequently he was able to astonish the instructors by his intimate grasp of detail.

Then followed in quick succession the assembly of the convoy, and the meeting of the shipmasters for final instructions as to their duties while in convoy.

Twenty-two tramp steamers of all sizes, ages and conditions, steamed off to the south'ard on their way to Gibraltar, there to disperse themselves to the corners of the earth, and the proudest Captain of all was Ginger in the *Lady Alice*.

It was the *Lady Alice* that nearly broke the convoy Commander's heart. Within an hour of leaving port she was the *Lazy Alice* to the whole fleet. Colliers who once held down their heads in shame, breasted the Biscay rollers in pride because they could manoeuvre with ease at six and a half knots. By the time the convoy had reached Gibraltar the *Lady Alice* could, with difficulty, manage six knots, and then only by omitting to "zig-zag." Monotonous indeed were the continuous stream of signals, "*Lady Alice* make all possible speed."

Four weeks later, after loading, the *Lady Alice* was just in time to join a homeward convoy. As the convoy left in the darkness hours, it was known to all that two enemy submarines were operating off St. Vincent. The convoy would give St. Vincent a wide berth.

The convoy had shaken itself down when MacManus, the Chief Engineer of the *Lady Alice*, surrounded by an atmosphere of blasphemy, made his way on to the bridge. "No use, Ginger!" was his opening remark. "H.P. gland's gone."

Ginger made rapid calculations and a quick decision. "About five hours, you say, Mac?"

"Mebbe four," was Mac's laconic reply.

"All right, Mac. I'll pull out of the convoy. They'll be glad to lose us." And Ginger having spoken, strode away.

In four minutes the shadowy shapes ahead merged into the night, and the uncanny stillness of a ship stopped in mid-ocean settled on the *Lady Alice*. In any case, by cutting the corner at Cape St. Vincent, Ginger hoped to gain about fourteen hours on the convoy and lead them triumphantly into Plymouth.

If the subs *were* there—well, Ginger never spoke of that, but he knew full well what Nelson would have done.

The subs *were* there.

In spite of the good look-out, a torpedo hit was

registered right on the for'ard bulkhead of the engine-room.

The damage was deadly. The stokehold crew were wiped out, the boilers exploded, the engine-room was wrecked, and at any moment the ship might break in two.

The gun's crew were smart to their stations, but the sub slipped swiftly ahead out of the arc of fire. At the moment when all hands tumbled up from below, a Hun machine gun made its death rattle.

"We'll last quite a while with this cargo of cork," was Ginger's cool remark, though he coughed badly when he said it, for there was a bullet in his lungs and another in his shoulder.

Bitter was his mortification, for here was the very site of Trafalgar. An enemy ship bare a hundred yards away, and he was unable to turn his ship round to fire his only gun. In the act of cheering up his crew with a smile, he reviled his God in heaven.

Then a voice from overside harshly bid them abandon ship. Everything was ready and the crew were well drilled. So smartly was the evolution carried out that it earned the praise of the German Commander. Yet it was not so quickly done that Ginger missed the chance of some whispering to the Chief Engineer and the Mate.

Some German sailors fixed bombs along the ship's side, and hurriedly departed.

Suddenly a wild-looking figure sprang on the poop as the *Lady Alice* slowly swung round in the trough of the rollers. Ginger worked feverishly, his left arm hanging limp, his mouth a fountain of crimson froth. In a matter of seconds the gun barked.

Again it barked, this time a hit on the armoured conning-tower.

All Ginger seemed to think about was Toby's commission. The words were burned into his brain, "*sink, burn, or destroy the enemy ships.*"

Then he seemed to hear the instructor's voice in

Devonport. "While a man remains, the gun must be worked."

Once again the gun barked, but it was a miss. Aghast, he saw his quarry escaping, and in the hurried diving the submarine rammed the life-boat and scattered the crew in the water.

There was a muffled roar and a heavy tremor through the ship as the bombs accomplished their work, but Ginger prepared to lay the gun for the fourth time.

Then it was he saw the second sub several miles away, and almost in the same moment there were two flashes. While he struggled to grasp it all, there came the reports and then a vivid orange flash. The second submarine registered a direct hit on the *Lady Alice's* twelve-pounder gun.

Thus passed Ginger, and above him the Red ensign was burnt with the shell burst and splashed with his blood.

Slowly but surely the news passed round to the seventy-four sailor towns of how that ruddy fool Ginger dodged the convoy to fight the second battle of Trafalgar.

They told how he lost twenty-one of his crew because he imagined that he was built like Nelson. One and all agreed that there was little of Nelson in his "make up."

I wonder if they were right?



PRANKS ON PADDY

SIRIUS and Orion gleaming overhead, the five starred Southern Cross low down in the southern sky, and beneath this wonderful canopy of a tropical night, Paddy sat on the fore hatch.

In a tenor, nay, in almost a falsetto voice, he crooned, no other word could describe it better, mournful and plaintive Irish folklore songs.

His very attitude was the spirit of his crooning, for, sitting on one bucket, he was crouched over another one, peeling potatoes in the faint beams from the riding light overhead.

Paddy, notwithstanding his extreme illiterateness, had the eyes of a dreamer and the expression of a poet. It was often a matter for speculation what strange trick Fate had played, to cast his lot as an ordinary seaman in the barque *Brenfield*.

In stature he was puny, painfully so. On one occasion the Bos'n had remarked that if Paddy walked backwards, he'd have a fine chest.

In ordinary walks of life he would have been inconspicuous, but in the fo'c'sle of a sailing ship where men have the physical attributes necessary to the strenuous life they lead, Paddy seemed strangely out of place.

Consequently, he was eased "off" from heavy labour and had to perform various menial jobs.

116 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

Thus came Paddy to be night watchman, whilst the ship was lying at anchor off a small "guano" island on the coast of Peru, with potato-peeling as one of his numerous duties.

Whether, as the result of his being Irish, his ardent religious feeling, the fact of his being an embryo sailor, or all three, he was extremely superstitious.

Fairies, banshees, ghosts, and spirits were his familiars, and it was this trait in his character which led the apprentices to play pranks on him. At first, they were simple in effect and construction, but as time went on, they developed their ingenuity, taking care that Paddy never found out the cause.

Let us resume with Paddy crooning,

*"They're hanging men and women
For the wearing of the Green."*

Whilst finishing the last line of a verse, he stretched out his hand to the kiddy for another potato, and even as he did so, one of the potatoes jumped up in the air fully six inches.

The song stopped suddenly, while the arm came back with the action like that of a catapult. With dilating nostrils, he sat bolt upright and peered cautiously right and left, then all round, and finally stared at the tin of potatoes.

A half-hearted attempt at the "Irish Emigrant" soon came to an end. With one eye on the potatoes, he slowly got up and went to the rail. Just as he was peeping over the side, the cable turning over in the hawsepipe made him jump a foot in the air. Realizing the cause quickly, he resumed his inspection over the side, whistling jauntily. Nevertheless, there was a nervous lilt in the tune.

Avoiding the shadows, he took a turn or two along the decks and once again sat down on the upturned bucket, reaching at the same time for a potato. In an elfish manner, one of them jumped out of the kiddy,

with a series of small hops, reached the ship's side and took a jump clean over the to'gallant rail into the water, with a splash that seemed startlingly loud in the silence of the night.

By this time, Paddy, using the other side of the deck, was well on the way aft, emitting ear-piercing yells of "Save me! Hould him back!" which was soon augmented by the angry remarks, in half a dozen languages, of various members of the crew. Meanwhile, "Ginger," up on the fore yard, awaited an opportunity of descending, unobserved, having made good use of a staple and a piece of string.

One prank each night and each boy in his proper turn. These were the only rules. Sometimes the preparations were in vain, for, though it was rightly guessed that Paddy would not use the fore hatch again in a hurry, it was not known in which place it was best to make preparations. However, a sing-song by the apprentices always brought Paddy from his labours to the half-deck. This oft-times brought a desired opportunity.

It was fitting that, after some stories, authentic and otherwise, of the "Flying Dutchman" and "Ghost ships," an attempt should be made on these lines.

Accordingly a large bent nail was hung by thread from the top of the large ship's bell on the fo'c'sle head, so that the nail touched the bottom of the bell. The nail, in turn, was also attached to a long piece of thread, manipulated by "Poppy" from a place of concealment on the top of the deckhouse, some fifty feet away.

A pull on the thread would cause the nail to hit the bell and give out a faint "dong."

Preparations having been made to their satisfaction, the boys now awaited an opportunity.

Lying at a quiet anchorage, with little else to do but work from six a.m. to six p.m., most of the crew were abed by nine-thirty. At about ten o'clock "Poppy" struck "four bells."

Paddy, in the act of filling some tanks on the fo'c'sle head with water, stared round about in amazement. More astonished than ever at seeing no sign of a ship close at hand, he made a more careful search to seaward, examined along the land, looked over both sides of the ship and then solemnly "crossed" himself. Still unsatisfied, he went aft to the poop for a further look round.

By quarter-past ten, however, he was back again to carry on with his tank filling. No sooner had he commenced emptying a bucket of water into the tank, when mysteriously, "five bells" were struck.

The half empty bucket was dropped suddenly and with a yell of "The Flying Dutchman! Save me from the spalpeens!" he bounded aft. By this time, "Chips," the carpenter, over whose head the bucket had been dropped, was on deck thirsting for someone's blood, for disturbing his sleep. Being a Liverpool-Irishman, he meant it. The Mate dressed in pyjamas gradually woke up, to find himself on the main deck, looking round the horizon for the "Flying Dutchman," with Paddy clutching at his arm.

Paddy was told his full character, together with his future life and early demise, in some well-chosen words, by various members of the crew. Nevertheless, Paddy did not fill the tanks that night.

It was a habit of Paddy's to spend an hour or two, during the night, walking up and down the fo'c'sle head. Underneath the forecastle were various store-rooms, each of which had a port-hole or scuttle, a few inches below the deck of the forecastle head.

In this case, the apparatus consisted of two scare-crows, each made out of a broom, cross-stick, hat and an old coat. Imagine then, Paddy's surprise, in his pacing to and fro, to be suddenly confronted by a weirdly-shaped man, apparently rising from the sea and shaking his arms at him. This was really worked from the port-hole.

But worse was to follow, for, as he turned to run across to the other side—thank goodness, thought Paddy, there were two ladders, one either side—he saw another man of the sea who, in deep sepulchral tones, warned Paddy to fly.

He did . . . for he jumped down to the fore hatchway, and a few yards farther on, tripped over a rope, stretched across the deck six inches high.

In vain were Paddy's protestations to the Mate that two dead men rose from the sea and chased him. In vain also that they had nearly caught him at the main hatch, for one of the varmints, God rest his soul, had caught him by the foot.

Would the Mate come along for himself and see?

No! He jolly well wouldn't, or at least words to that effect.

Furthermore, Paddy was strictly warned not to eat any more potatoes like himself, i.e., half-baked to upset his stomach. Added to this, there was a threat of more work at nights, to keep him properly awake.

The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft aglee.

For six nights the boys had waited patiently, and for six days they had talked to Paddy about the mysterious "Witch Bird" which had lived in that part of the world for several centuries, and they were almost on the point of giving up the idea of ever getting Paddy on that precise part of the main hatch necessary for their next exploit.

On two occasions his paraphernalia for potato-peeling had been carefully placed on the spot, and he had just as carefully moved them to another place.

He was tried with a nice deck chair, comfortable and seductive. They hid his funnel for tank filling on the very location.

As two boys had to be on "duty" ready for any eventuality, the prank was beginning to fall flat.

The chance came at last one evening. A washday

120 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

was suggested, and Paddy joined it. Finishing their washing suddenly, they left him to carry on by himself.

The decks were deserted, and, but for the distant roar on the surf on the beach, all was quiet. Suddenly, out on the starboard side, a loud flapping was heard, with a droning and humming, as of ten thousand bees. Paddy, with hair on end, looked up. Hurtling through the air and coming straight for him, was a flapping, huge, dark shape, with several tails. Paddy tumbled backwards, the flapping monster passed close over his head and dived into the water on the other side of the ship.

For several long minutes Paddy was speechless, and even after that time, could only mutter, "The Witch Bird."

The "Witch Bird" was a sack, filled with canvas, old rope, and other rubbish which was swung, pendulum wise, on the end of a long piece of very thin but strong rope, held by "Ginger" in the topmast rigging. The sack was released by "Toby" at the end of the main yardarm, the whole being dropped over the side at the end of the swing.

Sometimes the pranks were quite impromptu but one of them nearly culminated in tragedy.

Late one night, Paddy went into one of the store-rooms under the fo'c'sle. The rolling of the ship caused the door to shut with a bang. A few more bangs, a rattling of chains and some groans did the trick. He promptly locked himself in and yelled. As the only answers he got were moans and groans he yelled the louder. He tried the port-hole as a means of escape only to become firmly fixed, half in and half out.

In this predicament the boys tried to help him from outside, which only convinced him that a banshee had really got him at last.

After hard work he was liberated, but such were his

struggles that he slipped from the hands of his liberators and fell into the water. Eventually, nearly the whole crew helped in his rescue.

This escapade checked the high and boyish spirits of the apprentices, and they felt that they thoroughly deserved the punishment which followed. Paddy had had enough of being night-watchman and resumed daily work, but for months afterwards he spoke with bated breath of the huge " Witch Bird " which tried to snatch him from the main hatch.



FAVOURITE PORTS

It has been my experience that very few sailormen have a memory of one port that stands out vividly above all others. As like as not, on being asked the question, he will name off three or four almost in the same breath.

His choice will astonish his pals, perhaps even astonish himself in the passage of years, but it will be found on analysis that his love of any one certain port is on account of an emotion that was stirred by, or in, that place. In short, nine cases out of ten, the name of a seaport is merely the index of some emotional storm.

In offering my own experiences, I shall not be surprised if they coincide in many particulars with those of most other men of the sea, *except in the name of the port.*

There will be a "home" port, which will be the mecca in times of unemployment, the same place where examinations were passed and, what more than likely, that good times were spent there on account of being flush in the anticipation of "school" and "ticket."

Sailors have love affairs, so a port will come under this heading, but there are affairs and affairs.

There will certainly be a hectic jazzy port of which, perhaps, little need be said. Deep down in the heart

124 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

will be found some hidden cause that will not be told to but very few intimates.

Happy, indeed, is the boy whose early childhood is spent in the wonderful environment of a beautiful seaport such as Douglas, Isle of Man.

Many thousands have seen Douglas, but few know it, for in a brief holiday with money to burn and numerous "attractions," the soul and spirit of this age-old seaport are missed. Born within sound of the breakers, I retain vivid childhood memories of the wintry seas and the flying scud, for, strangely enough, those born in inland towns seldom pay any attention to clouds. Early in life, too, I used to be thrilled at the sound of the life-boat signals. Is it to be wondered at that the journeys of the life-boat crew were looked upon as common-place affairs? Yet, on their return, my shrill treble helped in the welcome. It was in Douglas that one of the foundations of the Royal National Life-boat Institution was laid, which is not without interest in the passing of their centenary year. Sir William Hilary, a local gentleman, was deeply stirred when a vessel drove ashore on the Conister Rock—better known nowadays as the Tower of Refuge—and, as the tide rose, the survivors were washed off, one by one, within a few hundred yards of thousands of people.

A tower was built by him on the rock, and he immediately set about the establishment of life-boats round the coast.

What park offers such a wonderful playground as the seashore with its sand, stones, boulders and pools? The rocks on the seashore afforded me many happy hours in the search for sticklebacks and crabs, and it goes without saying, that I was at an early age soaked in the sea. Only once did I play truant from school, and my father had firm views on education, but he did not quite cure me of the sea.

Then there was the lure of the harbour itself, and I confess that one of the chief attractions was the mortuary with the mysteries of its ever closed door,

always unsatisfied. In the vicinity were many skeletons of bygone ships and boats, a beloved playground of boys. Perhaps above all, there was the comings and goings of that crack channel service, the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, one of the oldest steamship companies in the world, and certainly one of the most progressive. Fast ships and smart handling were common, everyday occurrences. Added to all this was the natural beauty of the surroundings. Whatever happens, Douglas will be a favourite and romantic port of mine, and well able to maintain itself in the first three out of the hundreds I have since seen.

Valparaiso, I think, comes very near being my favourite port. With the exception of Hamburg—to which place I went direct from school and was only there a few days—Valparaiso was the first place I visited where a foreign tongue was spoken. Previously, I had been to the Sandwich Islands (Honolulu) and was shocked beyond measure to find one of the largest hotels I had ever seen. At school I was told that Captain Cook had been killed by the savages and, although not expecting to be tomahawked at sight, I was unprepared to land in a very modern up-to-date city, with bananas at sixpence a bunch, and more varieties of ices than ever dreamt of by the most imaginative of schoolboys.

Moreover, the old “shell backs” on the voyage out, had completely perplexed me by the gentle art of “leg pulling,” and I looked forward to seeing monkeys swinging themselves on the yardarms from the branches as the ship passed upstream. *I was disappointed with Honolulu.*

The next port of call was Newcastle, N.S.W., and I venture to assert that every sailing-ship man retains a very warm corner in his heart for this, the Mecca of the fast disappearing windbag. Twenty years ago it was not uncommon to see a couple of hundred of ships in that southern port. And the hospitality—

who will forget it? The Seamen's Mission was a real live thing, and it was not "patronized" by the local people, but rather, those of the sea passed direct into local homes, via the "Mission." One invariably found a family that intimately knew the home town.

Then again, one was free to join "the crowd" in a moonlight picnic, or a bathe, or else form one of a family party and, be it understood, the members of the party were of an age that believed in a good time.

Newcastle has another pull on the heartstrings. Probably in no other port in the world is it possible to find such intermingling amongst crews. The reasons are not far to seek. The port is small and compact. Very few tally clerks are required. There is often an idle period waiting for the tips. The usual attractions of a large city are absent and, unlike home coaling ports, the crews are living aboard.

Newcastle is like a magnet, for it attracts ships from every shore on the Pacific Ocean, and not a few from the Indian Ocean. When all else fails in the way of freight, the owner falls back on coal for the West Coast of South America.

For some unknown reason the latter trip is disliked. I can well remember going aboard a "Loch Line" packet in Newcastle. The "boys" were fed up. To think that the *Loch Line had come to this*. General cargo out and grain home was their one and only suit and now; *coal to the West Coast*.

Four out of the six boys in our half-deck had been on the West Coast before, and leg pulling commenced immediately. I wonder if those "Loch" boys have ever forgiven us. Well, I for one, felt that they deserved something for the way they made our mouths water with a recital of their menus at sea, and we were not a bad living ship by any means.

Who will be bold enough to define the charm of Newcastle? It was not a pretty place, at least not in the immediate vicinity, although the railway journey

to Sydney is a trip to be remembered for a lifetime with pleasure. It is true also that there are some delightful picnic localities within easy reach.

In offering an opinion I would say it is very green—there is good long grass within ten yards of any wharf. There is hospitality in its sincerest sense. A large number of crews are thrown upon their own resources for entertainment, and that in a small confine with the additional help of quiescent periods of waiting. Maybe the sailorman is subconsciously affected by the contrast between the anchorage in a nitrate port and lying alongside green grass. I would leave it at that.

Every ship bound for the West Coast in South America is hopeful of "loading for home." This means a lot to the first voyager.

Quite apart from this, South America was to me the "Spanish Main" of Drake and his compeers; the materialization of "Westward Ho," my favourite novel; the new world of Christopher Columbus, who, even to-day, is, in my humble opinion, one of the bravest men, physically as well as morally, in history. With pleasure I can say that after many years' experience up and down the coasts; the romantic admiration of childhood for South America remains undiminished.

Valparaiso was to be my next port. With an unforgettable feeling I can recollect my first glimpse of the Andes, one hundred and fifty miles away on a clear afternoon, and one thing after another helped to enshrine Valpo as my favourite port.

There it was in Valpo bay that my first ship was wrecked.

At the moment of her loss she automatically became my "last ship." Every sailorman knows that there is no ship like the last one, and she was my first "last ship." After a year's voyage an affection had grown up and I was not old enough or experienced enough to realize any imperfections; in fact, she had none.

There was nothing spectacular in her passing. She caught fire and we worked like sons o' guns to put it out. Our click-clanky-wunk pump was at the break of the fo'c'sle, and it provided me with the hardest labour I have ever had.

Previously, I had been admonished by "Chips" for using a two-pound hammer too vigorously on the for'ard bell; the lanyard only lasted about thirty seconds. Yet one could not help a feeling of pride in the response from other ships in the harbour. Ahead and astern, and on both sides, ships took up the signal of distress. Not many minutes had passed before the first boat load of volunteers arrived alongside *from a nearby German ship*, and this was before five in the morning.

What about the psychology of a crew in time of danger? I have already referred to "Chips'" wailing about damage to the bell, and when holes were cut in the after deck, he was on the point of tears. Our efforts were of no avail. Eventually we took to the boats and so to the mole. Not until then did we realize we were hungry.

The padre of the Seamen's Mission—Bruce Cumming, if I remember rightly—had a good and deep knowledge of human nature, and he took charge of the six boys. Clad in dungaree trousers and cotton shirts, without boots or hats, we were taken to a decent restaurant, and he asked us what we would like to eat.

Windbag sailors never get beyond ham and eggs. Thus we learnt our first Spanish, for we had the satisfaction of hearing the padre asking several times for *hamon con huevas*.

Spanish meal times are different from English as I found out when living in a large boarding-house in Valpo. This particular house catered for both the English and Spanish residents. Thus there was Spanish coffee and rolls at seven a.m., English breakfast at eight a.m., Spanish breakfast at ten-thirty a.m., English lunch at twelve-thirty p.m., Spanish afternoon

coffee at two p.m., English tea, four p.m., and dinner for all at seven-thirty p.m.

Needless to say that six boys were punctual at *every* meal, and our only complaint was that there was very little time between meals to eat ices. As was only to be expected, many friendships were formed during a month's residence ashore, not only that, but first impressions were close and intimate and therefore more lasting.

What most seamen would term an uninteresting one-horse-hole, stirred me considerably. I refer to the port of Labuan, at which place the ship I was aboard called for bunkers about 1910.

The East was not new to me, but within the first few hours I was struck by the remarkably large number of Chinese and Japanese labourers. The town is on the landward side on a small island that almost fills a large bay on the northern coast of the larger side of Borneo.

This latter is very rich in all things that matter, being fertile and abundant in minerals.

In my several sojourns in the Antipodes I had heard much of "White Australia" and of the Japanese question. Moreover, every sailor consciously or sub-consciously thinks imperially, and Labuan with its Japanese population, was the spark that sent me into the future.

Somehow, all important questions bearing on the Pacific and its contiguous empires, seem to have a bearing on Labuan; the Singapore Base, limitations of armaments, the American "Japanese Scare," "White Australia," Indian Independence, and the war-time riots in Singapore.

My actual recollections of Labuan are vague and concern trivial details, mostly humorous. I have said we were bunkering, and we were one of the first victims of a Temperley Transporter that was, by inclinations and temperament, very like a mule. It provided us with lots of spare time. It would not go, so one of the Chinese coolies jumped on the travelling chain to clear

it—then it went and would not stop. Neither did the Chink until he reached the apex of the coal in the bunkers—minus a big piece of his trousers.

I was a youthful officer, and of course I thought dustbins were made for ashes. True it is that on board a steamer, impatient firemen come near giving a faithful representation of pandemonium when signalling a surfeit of ashes. For some reason also, no matter how efficient or proficient the engine-room staff may be, the ash-hoist seems to consist of forty-seven very loose bottom ends, and the packing of the thirty-four valves is made of half-inch chain. Well that is what it sounds like in the middle watch.

Attracted by an atmosphere of profanity worthy of a blue-nose Bos'n, I came upon the "Chief" discoursing upon percentage of ash and Labuan coal. I wonder if Labuan is a favourite port of the Chief Engineer.

Owing to the misdirected energies of the aforesaid transporter, opportunities were taken for leisurely strolls. Coming suddenly upon a low building with a large gilded coat-of-arms, I entered to find myself for the first time in my life in the presence of the majesty of the law. The court-room was low and had a solid feeling. Here indeed, one felt that ponderous and weighty judgment could be pronounced.

The Clerk yelled out "Silence in the Court" and I looked towards the door through which the magistrate would enter. To my utter astonishment he was a youth in immaculate white ducks without wig or gown. Moreover, he took a goodly swig at some lemonade—I have no reason to doubt otherwise.

The first case was called. The interpreters were busy, for four nationalities were involved and the charge was hen stealing. The defendant pleaded "Not Guilty." That youthful magistrate was wonderfully patient. The value of the fowls was raised. Ninepence each they were; young cockerels.

The defendant became furious. He said vehemently

they were the toughest fowls he had ever eaten and were only worth 2½d. each—seven days.

I felt proud of being a citizen of the British Empire, especially, as I found out afterwards, that that same youth was off up country to superintend the construction of roads—and to collect taxes. In closing down on Labuan I feel that my thoughts of the future are quite outside the scope of this article, yet I wonder if some port has stirred other sailormen and caused them to try and penetrate the veil of the future. We live in tumultuous times and perhaps changes just as violent as the last decade are imminent. Perhaps too, Labuan will be in the path of the storm?

Many people have an affection for what may be termed the "home port." It is not so much the people that appeals to the mind, but rather that it will be the port of registry of apprenticeship days, the place where the embryo M.S. Captain will sit for his examinations, the place he will make for when out of berth, and most probably too, the place he will marry from and where he will make his home. In short, it will become his adopted hometown, and quite naturally his circle of acquaintances will grow wider as the years roll on.

There is no need for me to elaborate on any one place, although to me, I am unable to imagine how anyone can have a liking for Glasgow, Cardiff, or London, for whenever I arrived at any one of these places I counted the time slowly and painfully until I should be on my way to Liverpool.

Being in such a frame of mind I was unable to appreciate the beauties of Glasgow, but five a.m. on a May morning on the Clyde wants some beating, as I have since found out.

Perhaps my next selection I should describe as the romantic port, or rather, the historically romantic port. Moreover, it came up to expectation. It was all I wanted it to be. I refer to Bremen. On an east-bound North Atlantic trip I thought much of this next port of

call, being actuated by my love of the Elizabethan period. There were many contrasts, for we had just left Charleston, one of the great cotton seaports full of that whimsical and light-hearted race, the descendants of the negro slaves who were imported by Sir John Hawkins in the *Jesus* of Lubeck (one of the Hanse Towns). He was a splendid Elizabethan sailor who later led one of the squadrons against the Spanish Armada.

It is to Bremen and its companion cities in the Hanseatic League that we owe some of the foundations of our maritime strength. No modern upstart of a town, it was well on the way to civilization and power in the woad stain days of our island. Bremen was one of the original Hanse Towns, a league of North German seaports, founded in 1140. Henry III of England helped the League in its earlier years, which eventually became so strong that it defeated Denmark in war. Moreover, these same towns later waged war against us.

For many years they were practically the sole carriers by sea for Northern Europe, and they established a large factory in London. A number of our naval ships were built by them in Tudor times, but 1578, ten years before the Armada, Queen Elizabeth abolished all their rights and privileges. One of her decrees, by the way, was English bottoms for English goods. It is worthy of note that the Hanse Towns were the first to institute marine insurance in 1624, at which time, however, their power had waned tremendously. Notwithstanding this, the Hanseatic League still retain their freedom in many ways at the present time.

In common with the other Hanse Towns, Bremen shows a definite independence of spirit in German national affairs.

Portions of Bremen might be portions of Chester, so similar they are with their Elizabethan architecture. Like our cathedral cities, too, Bremen is clean, quiet and sedate, at but a short distance from the docks. Yet, only a few miles down the river are the great ship-

building yards of Blohm and Voss, whence come the Atlantic leviathans.

In Bremen I found much food for reflection. Five hundred years ago the Germans were our only serious rivals in trade, as they are to-day. From them at that time we learnt much of the sea—I advisedly say learnt, for I doubt if they ever attempted to teach us—and one of our first great sailors, Sir John Hawkins, pursued some of his earlier voyages in a ship built at Lubeck, a companion town.

We, as sailors, have much to be thankful for in Bremen, and a British sailorman, seeking after historical information, is made more than welcome by her people.

There is another class of port that requires comment, because such a place will be a favourite, and that is the town at the “end of the run”; where the ship turns round. This applies to those on a regular run for years.

In many respects it is similar to a home port, for in it a man will be happy on account of knowing the locality, and not in any superficial way, but through friends and acquaintances of many years standing. As like as not, it will be a large town where the Company’s flag is well known and respected.

Pleasures will not have to be bought at a dear price, for when all is reckoned up, purchased pleasures do not linger in the memory.

Friendships are made which stand the test of time. Such a place, too, is a sort of “half-way house,” a home from home, and the one place on the voyage where there is any leisure in these days of bustle and activity.

This kind of port will not be classed as a romantic port, but very often it will be a favourite one.

Some years ago, when serving in a tramp, I found myself in Otaru in the north of Japan, and this place I consider the most romantic port I have ever visited. Foreign ships were very rare indeed, and we were as much an object of wonder to the local Japanese as they were to us.

Here was the real Japan, and I counted myself very fortunate indeed to have been invited to stay with a local family for a long week-end. I quickly found that they had very quaint and weird ideas of Western habits, yet I was sorry to disappoint the whole family in their cherished ambition, that their son could converse fluently in English, and that he was fully conversant with Western habits and customs.

Their hospitality was wonderful, yet my stay was somewhat embarrassing, for every minute action was repeated with vigour and precision, as being "best English." My stay made a deep impression upon me : *that I was a citizen of a great empire, that I had responsibilities and obligations, and a reputation to live up to.*

I shall always remember Otaru, and I hope I shall always remember what it taught me.



CERRO AZUL

SOME twenty-five leagues south of Callao there lies the tiny Peruvian seaport of Cerro Azul, and its Spanish name of the Blue Hill does not belie it.

Nestling at the landward side to a bold prominence 1,500 feet high, it boasts no industry beyond that of dispatching the cane sugar produced in the fertile valley which stretches towards the lofty Andes eighty miles inland.

Apart from this valley the surrounding country is barren of vegetation of any kind. Consequently any ship in the vicinity has to send periodically to Cerro Azul for fresh provisions to replenish the larder.

Imagine then a small islet a quarter of a mile in circumference, shaped for all the world like one of the lions in Trafalgar Square—it is called Lion Island—and close to, lying at anchor, the barque *Brenfield*.

As far as the eye can see on either side is a bleak, drab, and desolate coast that assumes weird and fantastic shapes and designs with every altitude of the sun. No sign of human habitation or vegetation is to be seen. A few small and dirty white ships' life-boats ply to and fro between the ship and the end of an aerial cable stretching from the cliffs of the island down to an anchor many fathoms deep. Keen eyes will notice a sack, which is attached to a travelling pulley, coming down the wire. As the sack nears the water,

one of the life-boats, rising and falling to the ten feet swell rolling shorewards, manoeuvres in peril to receive it. The boat rises on a roller; a hasty tug at a hitch, and the sack plops into the boat there to be received by the four or five half-breed Indians who form the crew. A dozen to a score sacks make up a boatload according to the weather, which is soon on its way to the ship a mile distant.

At the other end of the wire in just as crude and laborious a manner, some fifty natives are scraping and scratching up the centuries-old deposit of guano formed by myriads of birds and marine amphibians.

A ship's boat made a weekly trip to Cerro Azul, twenty-one miles away, in order to bring back provisions for these natives and crew, and the apprentices always made ceremonial work of the preparations for the long pull, not because of the importance of the journey, but in order to escape for a few hours from working amongst the guano, which any sanitary officer would have condemned "on sniff."

A quick gulping of half-boiled rice and real Madras curry—made in Glasgow—a hurried look in the boat to see that the primus stove contained oil, the locker had its quota of ship's biscuits, Maconnachie rations (South African War relics), water kegs full and secure, *café au lait* (tinned), letters for home and then "Lower away," after which they would pull round to the gangway. The senior apprentice reported the boat alongside and, if the gods smiled, surreptitiously received half a dozen hard-boiled eggs from the Captain's wife and sometimes an extra tin of condensed milk.

By quarter to eight the Captain would settle himself firmly in the sternsheets, pull his hat down over his head and grab the yokelines as if he meant to turn the boat inside out from stern to stem, then with a laconic "Shove off!" he would commence with numerous coughs to give the mate his instructions for the day;

every few seconds the Mate would wave his hand in acquiescence. With a glum look and bleary eye the Captain would give his final shot, "See if you can't get three tons in by noon." With a fifty yards spurt to whip up their circulation, the boys would amusedly watch the Mate on the poop waving his hand every few seconds to the Captain long after the latter had ceased his instructions.

A carelessly handled oar and a wave crest is clipped, sending a shower in the Captain's face. This is the spark, the last straw—a sluggish liver bubbles over. The rowers are busy, however, and twenty-five yards still remain of the spurt. The beneficial effect of the spray soon asserts itself, and then with an "Easy all," they settle down to a steady eighteen to the minute for the twenty-mile pull.

Nine miles away can be seen and smelt, Lobos Point with its outlying rock a few hundred feet across, where at any time of the day or night a thousand sea lions might be found, from the huge shaggy-maned monster always perched on the topmost point to the maturing "batchelors" soon to be driven away from the "married quarters." A mile away are the high beetling cliffs, drab and dreary-looking, trackless and arid; and screaming overhead twenty different kinds of seabirds in their thousands wend their way south'ard following the shoals of herring and mackerel. Suddenly right abeam of the boat a school of thirty diving gannets close their wings and nose-dive from a height of one hundred feet, and in a second or two each rises with a struggling herring.

Far way on the port bow a hoarse and raucous barking and yapping proclaims a rookery of young batchelor sea-lions.

Suddenly, close to the boat, two lumbering and ungainly pelicans swoop down in the midst of a shoal of herrings, and the active little sea-mews, darting and swooping hither and thither, nimbly pick up stragglers; meanwhile the solemn-looking pelicans make awkward

138 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

attempts to rise again. One is successful, but the other, making gigantic strides along the surface, actually trips on the crest of a wave and flops in the water spreadeagled. He disgorges half a dozen fish from the pouch under his long bill, for he has an eye on the rapidly approaching boat, and this time he is more successful, all of which tickles the Captain immensely.

Suddenly, but a yard away on the port beam, a sea-lion rises head and shoulders out of the water with a large horse mackerel in his mouth, and almost in the same action jumps out of the water and dives head foremost. Truth to tell it would not be easy to say whether the Captain or the sea-lion was the more surprised. Shortly, however, the sea-lion rises again, but this time three hundred yards away, and with a vigorous shake of his head the mackerel is thrown far away, leaving a respectable mouthful still between his teeth. This is swallowed, the sea-lion retrieves the mackerel and the shake is repeated, a clear case of "shake before taking."

By half-past nine those in the boat, having rounded Lobos Point, are in sight of the high land of Cerro Azul. Astern the delicate tracery of the upper yards of the *Brenfield* is still visible, for the atmosphere along the South American Coast is remarkably clear.

By this time the sun is getting quite warm and the boys "peel off" coats or jerseys. By this time also, the land breeze has finished and, with a smoother sea, heartened by the sight of their destination, they bend their backs with good will. Gradually the purplish tinge of the uplands ahead changes into green, the foliage dark and the pastures light, with the lighter spots which later resolve themselves into gaudy blue, pink, yellow and green houses so beloved of the "dagoes."

A shoreward course is steered and the swell becomes more perceptible. Of the village of Cerro Azul nothing can be seen, being hidden behind the point.

At four miles distance the surf can be seen quite plainly on the quarter-mile beach, and the rowers speculate as to the height of the surf. Usually the limit is about a ten foot surf. Should it be higher, the anchor will be dropped outside the breakers, whilst a native surf boat comes off to take the Captain ashore.

There being no attempt at launching a boat by the people on the beach, it is taken for granted that it is safe and preparations are made accordingly. The boys strip down to dungaree trousers and shirt, unship the rudder and substitute an oar over the stern. After making sure that stores and utensils are properly secured they pull easy to the bottom of the cliffs to seaward of the beach, because the water here being deeper the rollers do not break so far out. The surf from here, bad as it is, looks much worse. With the high precipitous cliff as pivot the rollers wheel round to the beach which is out of sight on the other side.

The boat is pulled easy to where the rollers commence cresting; there is a difference in the size. Why it should be so is vague, but invariably three large rollers are succeeded by a number of smaller ones, and of this they take advantage.

Strung up to concert pitch the boat's crew enters the crested area. The proverbial three large rollers are coming in, two ahead and one still to come. The boys, sitting tensely with their faces towards the stern, can see No. 3 "swelling visibly," and approaching at fifteen miles an hour. Twenty-five yards away the head is becoming less round, high and more ridged. They watch intently, pulling the while not so much to make headway but to keep the boat end on to the approaching wave.

Whoop! thirty yards to the right the first bucketful of water falls over. She breaks!

"Give way all." The oars bend as they pant and heave, the swirling eddies from the four blades fall rapidly astern, but the roller is gaining rapidly. The boat is perhaps doing seven knots at this moment.

140 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

The break is now spreading rapidly to right and left, and then with the stern up the boat gathers momentum in sliding down the forward side of the roller. Oh! Those mad exhilarating moments as the roaring crest creeps inch by inch along the gunwales. The boat slowly comes to an even keel, the crest meanwhile rising higher and exposing more and more of the bow and stern. They are thankful indeed that the crest has passed ahead, for in the last few seconds the water was pouring in, but they are not ashore yet by any means and must still strain every ounce of weight.

Rounding the point they can see the tiny wooden jetty, the scattered collection of houses, and the railway trucks, but they have no time for these, for a breaker eight feet high is roaring astern and rapidly approaching. The workers on the jetty, glad of an excuse to stop work, are intently watching the mad "gringoes." The boat is making good headway and the breaker, now close at hand, is down to about five feet and getting less. Four feet of white foaming surf reach the stern, whilst the rowers pull harder than ever; the Captain stands up to keep the seat of his trousers dry, but the boat surges forward in the breaker and sits him down suddenly as the crest splashes over the stern. No. 3 has his oar unshipped, the boat swerves. "Pull Ginger!" is the shout, for one has to do the work of two. Aided by the steering oar the anxious moment passes, and rushing shoreward on the crest, still straining every nerve, they breathe more freely as Dick reships his oar. In a few seconds the welcome grating of shingle on planks (for this is a shallow beach) is the cue for "Laying in" our oars and jumping into the water, two on either side, just as the next breaker arrives with whose aid and that of the bystanders the boat is run high and dry. So ends landing in the surf. The sun is now quite warm, it just being noon, and their clothes soon dry, which is just in the time they arrive at the "hotel" for lunch.

They do not travel by any road or street, for there

is none, they simply take the shortest cut which winds amongst the huts. The nicest house in the village is the hotel, even though the outhouses have walls made of kerosene and petrol tins flattened out. As it never rains here for centuries at a time it does not matter much. The proprietor is passing rich for he is everything except Captain del Puerto (Mayor), and he would be that were it not for his nationality, which is Italian. He will sell you a motor-car, if the letter ordering it from America be written for him, or mustard to the value of one twentieth of a penny, but the pride of his eye are his fighting cocks, of which more anon.

As the Captain has ordered lunch, the boys take their places in what corresponds to the kitchen. With the luncheon there is no quarrel, being of mixed Italian, Spanish, and native menus, and consequently interesting and mysterious. Every course, however, contains either rice or macaroni. Close to the table is a small pond in the floor in which noisy ducks disport themselves, and all went well until the Indian girl who waited upon the boys took the dishes off the table and washed them in the pond. However, the proprietor charged and charged heavily for a full lunch.

After all, the Captain was a shipmate and they could not see him done down, so they decided on revenge, or perhaps it should be said value for money paid. This was easy; two of them played on his vanity. They asked to see his fighting cocks, of which much had been heard in Liverpool, while the other two helped themselves to pickles, sauces, jams, and other sundries beloved of growing youths. Then they hurriedly joined in the "fiesta" celebrations a mile away.

A "fiesta" is a Spanish public holiday—there are many such. All Saint days are fiestas, likewise every third working day. Should the surf be over ten feet it is essentially a fiesta, while it becomes lawful to hold feasts with small surfs. A single working day between two fiestas automatically joins the happy throng of

holidays. All historical anniversaries are likewise days of rejoicing. Should there be a paucity of fiestas in any one week it follows that the first two days of the following week are declared fiestas. In short, sufficient work only is carried out for bare existence. On most of the fiestas there are the sports, cock-fighting, cock-sword, gambling and anything that does not require effort.

The boys arrived in time to see the second cock-fight. Very sharp steel spurs an inch long were already adjusted. A ring was formed by the onlookers about sixteen feet in diameter. It is hardly necessary to describe the cock-fight here in detail, but of cock-sword perhaps some description should be given because it is not so well known as cock-fighting.

A cock is buried in the sand so that only the head and shoulders are exposed, a man, blindfolded, armed with a sword, is placed fifteen paces away. In the approved "blind man's buff" style he is turned round three times, at which everyone scatters, for his aim is to cut off the head of the fowl. The first attempt was made by a young soldier. He was distinctly nervous. The crowd were very respectful in the matter of space. As everyone pretends to be the cock by imitating his sounds, this produces some confusion; the soldier, however, listened intently and detected the sound of a cock held in the arms of one of the spectators, whereat the swordsman made a frantic rush in that direction and nearly decapitated the owner, who in his hasty flight dropped the cock. The cock, finding himself in the centre of a ring, commenced to crow lustily. Twice the soldier made a sweep with the sword but each time the cock jumped, making more noise than ever. A whistle is blown, the time limit of three minutes is up and a fresh competitor prepares. He is a young half-breed from the valley and has had some pisco, a strange mixture, distilled locally, having the properties of petrol, gin, whisky, methylated spirits and sulphuric acid. His attempt is strange indeed, for he walks slowly and

unsteadily in the right direction, and then he makes a vigorous sweep with the sword which swings right round and hits him behind, which decides him to sit down in the sand and cry lustily. The next competitor is cunning. On being turned round he drops on hands and knees and feels around him in the sand for some stones he had previously noted the direction of, in relation to the cock. With this guide he advances slowly a full two-thirds of the distance and suddenly jumps in the air. The cock displays his agitation unmistakably. One more advance and another jump paves the way for the cock's doom.

Having seen sufficient of the sports they made their way towards the high cliffs on the seaward side of the town.

They were fortunate indeed to meet the Captain de Puerto, a very estimable and courtly old gentleman. He certainly did not look his seventy-eight years and his activity was that of a man in the thirties. On the way he recounted many stirring tales of the Chileno-Peruvian War of nearly half a century before, in which he had taken a very active part. He told how the Peruvians had made one of their last fights in the valley before being driven back on to the cliffs, which rise up behind the town only to end in a sheer precipice, and of the fierce hand to hand fighting which culminated in the combatants throwing each other into the sea.

It was with a sad sort of pride he related these accounts and his eye flashed as he spoke of the hope in every Peruvian's heart of liberating the province of Arica from the Chilians.

The foothold on the edge of the cliffs was precarious owing to the deposit from the myriads of sea birds which made their homes there. Some of the smaller types of sea-mews made the boys feel uncomfortable with their attacks upon them, for it was their nesting time. They were continually swooping and diving at their heads as they walked along, and there was no mistaking the anger in their shrill cries. Yet the boys could not

resist pausing a while to drink in the wonderful scene before them. They were, it seemed, on an island of rock. Below was the town, at this distance, almost beautiful. The garish and gaudy painted houses were toned down to delightful pastel shades amid the fawn of the sands. Whilst beyond was the beach with the long curving walls of surf bending round towards the coast on the left.

To the southward on the right hand side the drab looking coast-line melted away to the downy purple of grapes, and stretching away from us, the valley, with its Japanese town of four thousand people in the half distance, reached to the foothills of the Andes, a distance of eighty miles away, in billows of greens, olives, blues and purples. Beyond this again, seemingly resting on nothing, a snow-clad peak jutted up here and there.

As the time was nearly up they hurried down, for they were to start back by seven p.m. and the stores were yet to be loaded aboard. These consisted of two quarters of beef, two sacks of potatoes, a sack of rice and other odds and ends. The loading did not take long although the boat was launched first and held end on to the surf whilst bystanders carried out the stores. The rice had to be protected from possible chance of getting wet. The spare oar, mast and sails had to be slung outside of the boat and sufficient room left for pulling. Not much spare room, therefore, was available in this ordinary ship's gig.

The time is ready for the start. As on entering, they are clad only in light trousers and shirt. Four hefty half-breed niggers, with one hand each supporting the legs of a chair on high, carry the Captain to the boat, which is even now riding deep on the water. Bow oar and stroke are still in the water keeping the boat straight, and all wonder how much water will be shipped in making the open sea. Two oars are shipped and the boat moves ahead slowly, stroke jumps in and helps followed by bow. Under weigh at last but progress is slow for a moment or two, a breaker just having passed.

Gradually the undertow makes itself felt and the boat moves with more speed.

They anxiously scan the Captain who, with a brother Scot, has been celebrating the fiesta. He, however, if hilarious, is instinctively keeping the boat straight. Out of the corner of their eyes, for their backs are towards the oncoming rollers, they can see the next breaker approaching and they pull with a will. With a sousing for "bow oar" and a lapping over the gun-wales it passes astern, and it seems they have taken the first hurdle well.

"Come on, boys, put your weight into it, the next is a little one." The Captain has sobered up considerably.

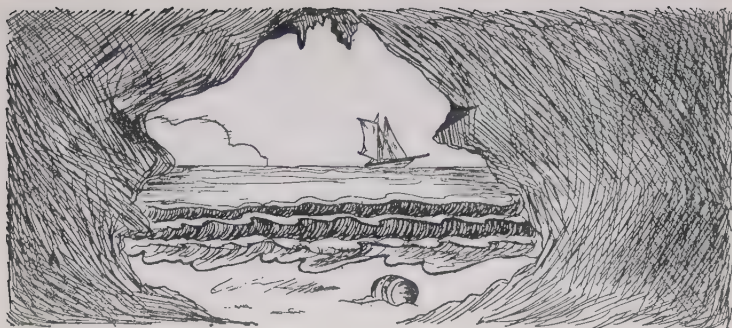
"There's the mail-boat, boys!" Somehow the remark spurs them on. The bows rise again, the huge ridge of water stretches on either side and then with the stern in the air they slide down the far side of the roller—safe. Ten yards away she breaks.

"Well done, boys! Easy all."

Behind them the cable rattles through the hawse-pipe of the mail-boat, which is presently boarded to purchase vegetables and have a half-hour's chat with old friends.

By nine o'clock they are five miles away, using the lights of the liner as a stern guide.

With the ever freshening breeze good progress is made and soon the riding lights of the *Brenfield* winks welcome with every roll. Although nearly midnight, the officers, Cook, steward, cabin-boy and watchman lend willing hands to get the stores aboard, and soon, with warm soup prepared by the Captain's wife, they turn in to sleep as only youthful and tired sailors can sleep.



DANDYFUNK AND PLUM- PUDDINGS

SAILORS and schoolboys are probably the most romantic of all animals, and at no time does their sentiment rise to the surface like it does at Christmas.

In the Navy, the most popular leave of the year is undoubtedly that of Christmastide, and, as the bulk of the Fleet is in home waters, a goodly proportion are able to enjoy their leave at home; but, in our huge Merchant Service with its personnel of hundreds of thousands, it is only a very small number who are able to go home for the festive season.

Perhaps about half of these are afloat, in many climes and seas, while the remainder are scattered about in the seaports of the world.

In the latter case, the indefatigable Missions to Seamen make heroic efforts to introduce the proper festive atmosphere into the innumerable arrangements made to brighten Jack's life.

Yet they labour under immense difficulties. In the tropical and southern hemisphere seaports, try how one will, it is difficult to reconcile mosquito bites with chilblains, especially if the nose or neck be the location selected by the "skeeta."

And again, consider sitting down to a steaming hot plum-pudding in a temperature 110° in the shade, and praying to goodness that the ice-cream will not be long or small.

A delightful little craft in pink and white stud'n'sls close alongside the starboard hand, murmurs in a voice reminiscent of the silvery splash of the bow-wave in a tropical night, "Have you ever seen any real snow falling?" With a heart full of envy at her ability to keep cool, an explanation is rendered which makes the teller perspire to the uttermost limit—and then the padre suggests a dance.

More than likely a football match is an item on the programme. This is the acme of "showing the flag"; for those who live in hot places are enabled to judge of what stern stuff our sailormen are made. The Second Mate's whistle is frequently ignored, and, as a result of the shake down, room is quickly found for another meal.

Bathing is sure to be an enjoyable item, followed perhaps by charades, and even a hymn or two—but sailors don't care. The moonlight picnic which follows, is worth the day's hard work.

Everyone abroad does his best to enjoy Christmas, and to enfuse a festive spirit into the surroundings. Yet, notwithstanding all this, the sailorman when he gets afloat again in the quiet night watches, looks back upon it all as a real jolly good time, just as he would of a Bank Holiday at the seaside. His Christmas is a real thing, a pleasurable emotion to be treasured and fondled in solitude and quietness, a time of memories and visions, and dreams of the perfect Yuletide at home, unsullied by care or tribulation, surrounded by the friends of those far-off days. Perhaps many of the friends are no more, yet, mark it well—they will share his reverie.

It is at sea on Christmas Day, one of the three holidays of the sailor, that he is able to indulge in his dreams. Work is cut down to the barest minimum

consistent with the safe working of the ship, and outwardly to the eye it is just an exaggerated Sunday.

If it be in the huge Atlantic liner the heart will be aching, for a few days either way, and he would have sat at his own table with mother, wife or sweetheart.

Apart from this, those who travel far and long will go through the same ritual, be they grey-haired shell-backs or clumsy galoots.

One by one they will leave the poker school, the wash-tub, the patching of trousers, the airing of shore-going togs, or the making of models.

Alone, they will find some excuse to open their sea-chest and fish out the ditty-box. Alone, too, they will finger and fondle the treasures and keepsakes of yesterday or long ago. Perhaps a photo of Mother or an old Christmas card from *the* girl, for contrary to popular opinion the sailorman does have one true love. It may be that memory lingers over an old school chum's letter.

Like a flood, there flows the old recollections. The liquid chimes across the valley, perky little redbreasted robins, the crackling and roaring fire in the grate, the critch-critch of crisp snow underfoot in the moonlight. The mind sees the heart's wish, for time mellows and ripens memory.

Perhaps he may be in a "tramp," rolling her "guts" out in the North Pacific or scudding light before the never-ending gales of the roaring forties. It may be that he is on a "banana" boat hurrying home for the New Year market.

A goodly number will be on a windjammer battering round the Horn. Worse still, he may just be outward bound, down channel, with gaily lighted towns abeam.

Wherever he may be, his thoughts will be home where there are carols and robins, bells and bright frosty snow—or so he will imagine.

Reluctantly, he will put his treasures away, and,

150 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

primed for a delightful two hours' reverie, he will make himself ready for a trick at the wheel or look-out.

Later on, perhaps, he will seek out his "towny," and together pacing up and down the deck, they will exchange reminiscences of other Christmas Days, in other climes.

He will sigh in vain for goose or turkey. "Salt horse" will be his portion, and not very large at that. No doubt a duff will be boiling, but not always.

Should the sailorman be in a "good living" ship, the steward may add a handful of candied peel and a few raisins in addition to the currants which have been added for appearance's sake.

There was the case of a very mean Captain who was owner of his ship. He was the sort of man who stopped his clocks each night, so that they would not wear out so quickly.

It was Christmas Day and a big duff was boiling, but not for the six very hungry apprentices.

It was blowing as hard as it knows how in the roaring forties, and because the Old Man was economical, the ship was rolling her yard-arms under.

It was past noon as the steward gingerly made his way towards the galley. And the boys muttered doubtful benedictions on his trip along the deck, for there was a distinct connection between certain gnawing pains and this red-whiskered individual.

Nevertheless, he reached the galley safely.

And then she rolled. There was a terrific c-r-r-u-m-mp and a solid green sea smashed in the weather galley door. Not only that, but the contents of the galley, including the Cook and steward, were washed through the lee doors.

Pots and pans and steaming cinders showed up black against the foaming white cascades of water in the lee scuppers. Many rushed to help in retrieving what was possible, but—apart from a slight sea-watery taste on the outside—the Captain's duff vanished for ever and the boys saw it off.

Sometimes it so happens that many months after Christmas, a well-battered parcel will arrive aboard, the contents a little crusted and whiskered on the outside perhaps, but still, a good old-fashioned plum-pudding, made by loving hands at home. Such parcels have been known to chase a sailing ship for eighteen months, and even then the lot was demolished before the mails were read.

Not so fortunate, however, was a certain apprentice in a "windbag" lying in a South American anchorage. It was customary for all and sundry men of the sea, to call at the local post office for their mails. A large bundle of letters would be handed over the counter for inspection. Some had no envelopes, others were without contents. Seldom were parcels to be found, but on this particular occasion there was a parcel that looked interesting, inscribed with familiar writing.

It weighed heavily and there were several shillings to pay. Three excited boys hunted the Old Man in his lair, and begged the necessary money. The parcel contained a large pudding-basin in several pieces, together with some stones and sand. All the post-master could say was, "No savvy!" Still, he looked somewhat dyspeptic.

The most appetizing meal of the day will be tea, for the dish will be dandyfunk.

To appreciate dandyfunk properly, one should be on a hungry ship when, for several days before, sacrifices will have to be made. A stranger should taste first and not ask its composition, for the recipe is never exactly the same.

The principal underlying it, however, is well established. Moreover, it is usually reserved as a Friday evening dish, although some bold spirits will make a real tip-top dandyfunk on Sunday, which involves semi-starvation for the rest of the week.

Perhaps the secret is now partially guessed, for the

152 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

Cook never, or at least hardly ever, makes it. Dandyfunk is made by the "peggy"—who, in the Navy, is better known as the mess Cook—and it is a delectable dish fit for the Olympian gods themselves. In short, everything that can, by any stretch of imagination be called food, is incorporated.

Such widely divergent things as salt pork and condensed milk form the ingredients. The backbone of the dish is made from ship's biscuits, not the liner variety, but real good old pantiles, the sort that hardly become damp after twelve hours soaking in water, biscuits that increase fourfold in size after twenty-four hours in a bucket of water, baby tombstones, whose very virtue is contained in their adamantine quality, for even weevils have a limit to the strength of their teeth; the only weapon, in addition to his sheath knife, that sailormen are legally permitted to possess.

Mix well, as the cookery book says, into the available soaked biscuits all the contents of every single utensil tin in the food locker. The sticky brown molasses and the piece of salt pork; do not forget the seven stranded left-handed piece of salt beef. Don't bother about a spoon but empty the pickle jar and the marmalade tin. The condensed milk, perhaps, has run low, but in it goes with the aid of some hot water and a sheath knife. Joyful shouts proclaim the discovery of a piece of salt fish which is closely followed by porridge and some curry and rice, arm-in-arm. Any "peggy" worthy of the name will steal a few currants and raisins, each one of which will be pushed down by finger, lest the cook should turn nasty and refuse to supply a spoonful of dripping to smear over the top. Dandyfunk is not really a mystery, it's a miracle.

The Old Man may catch the spirit of the season, and order double whacks of lime juice—the issue of which is a legal obligation on the part of the shipowner—yet, as like as not, the steward will forget the extra sugar to sweeten it. Lucky indeed is the ship's crew that will splice the main brace, but should it be so, many will

drink a silent toast to those at home. The cynics, happily few and far between, will drink to "Our wives and sweethearts. May they never meet!"

Sometimes it so happens that the "cherub up aloft" who looks after Jack at sea, provides a welcome addition to the larder.

On the tropical ocean highways, there are flying fishes in abundance, and these are the most succulent and tender of all fish. Moreover, they fly aboard, and a grilled flying fish makes a course that is a welcome and tasty change. In the same regions are to be found albacore and bonito, not unlike an enlarged mackerel, whilst in the colder latitudes a good harpooner under the jibboom will "connect" with a hundred pound porpoise. Here indeed is a feast for the gods, for with the exception of feet and head, there is the complete "porker for food." The Captain will be presented with the heart, liver and sweetbreads.

Scarcely more than a decade ago, a sailing ship homeward bound, sighted Ireland a week before Christmas. She was bound for Glasgow, normally a four days' journey.

A fortnight afterwards the same lighthouse was sighted again. They on board had been on very short rations for weeks, and it was a further three weeks before they finally anchored in the Clyde, owing to the extremely heavy weather.

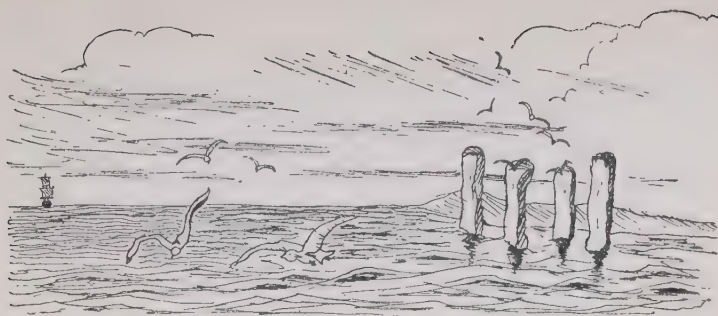
For six days they were on the track of the Holyhead-Kingston packets, but never a tug would have been able to assist in such weather, so they on the windbag had to be content in laboriously signalling the compliments of the season.

On clear nights many of the crew could see the loom of the lights of their home town, and their imagination running riot was the essence of sweet anguish. Yet their Christmas Day went with a swing, for they caught two fine porpoises on Christmas Eve.

In hardship or in plenty, no matter how widely travelled he may be, no matter the lure of the tropics,

154 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

the mysteries of the Orient, the gay life of the cities, the sunshine of the Antipodes, in his quiet moments of reflection, the seaman's thoughts turn homeward, for in his heart he is just a boy on this day of all days, Christmas at sea.



SEVENTY-FIVE GUINEAS PER CENT

“HEY, Toby! Turn up the lamp a bit higher,” bawled out Jock at the top of his voice, which was necessary, there being four choruses in progress at once.

“It’s full on now!” answered five voices simultaneously.

Each ship possesses a Toby and some nine or ten ships were represented in the *Brenfield’s* half-deck.

The occasion was a farewell beano to the boys of the *Myway*, due to sail in the morning. The harbour of Newcastle, N.S.W., was full of windjammers, and the towering coal tips were almost indistinguishable amidst the maze and tracery of some seven hundred masts with their half-dozen yards apiece. Now, only a generation afterwards, their places are taken by squat square-nosed tramp-steamers with stunted masts and multi-coloured funnels.

Newcastle, the Australian coaling seaport, was one of the last strongholds of the sailing ship, whence proceeded a long and varied procession to all points of the Pacific, but principally to the West Coast of South America.

The present beano was similar to scores that happened in the course of a year. To see what was

156 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

afoot would be well-nigh impossible, for, in addition to the smoke from two over-worked oil lamps, everyone was indulging in pipe, cigar, or cigarette. In a room twenty-two feet by ten feet there were crowded some three score apprentices. Two pairs of bunks, upper and lower, lined either side of the half-deck, and another pair were athwart. Normally, ten lively young boys ate, slept, and generally lived the best four years of their life therein. The furniture was extremely simple, consisting as it did of one fairly spacious food cupboard and a hinged table.

Care was needed on entering, to step over the twenty-inch "weather board." Even then, a visitor strange to such a place, would ejaculate another softly smothered "Damn," but a polite and sympathetic, "Sorry, old cock! These sea-chests are *so* hard to the shins," would help to soothe matters. Such sympathy, however, was not for apprentices from other ships, for their half-deck was even as this one.

It was not difficult to locate the "beano" ship unless one was stone deaf, because the contents of the four starboard bunks were in full swing with "On the Banks of the Wabash F-a-a-a-r A-w-a-a-a-y," notwithstanding that the washstand, oilskin locker, and the for'ard bunks were persisting in "Three Blind Mice."

The port for'ard bunks were benevolently neutral, which is easily explained because they, between them, possessed all the available pannikins and most of the refreshments.

The water tank, weather board, and the two port after bunks were more than holding their own, for, with the aid of marling spikes, kettledrums, a banjo, and the thumping of a sea-boot on the water tank, they had reached the forty-seventh verse of "One Man went to Mow."

The oilskin locker and the washstand having got possession of some of the pannikins, the "Three Blind Mice" faded away and were finally drowned by "On the Banks of the Wabash Far Away."

Faintly through the din could be heard a score lusty voices on the main hatch warming up to "Rolling Home," whereat everyone inside were spurred to greater efforts than ever and the whole of the for'ard end, oilskin locker and all, threw themselves into the "Wabash." The tank-banger mutinied, and finally over three score hefty boys of the sea were telling the whole harbour about a river far away.

A touzled face, half blinded by the light and with a pair of keen grey eyes that endeavoured to pierce the smoke, suddenly appeared at the door.

"Toby, if you don't shut up this blankety blank row, I will!"

Sailors, especially First Mates, are not renowned for conventional platitudes of dismissal, and the uncomplimentary remarks passed unchallenged as the speaker turned aft abruptly, holding up his back to front trousers. For the first time in two hours the rattle and roar of thirty ton wagons of coal being dumped on board the ship next astern, was heard by the half-deck's inmates as they hurriedly said their good-byes.

Jestingly, local sweethearts were consigned into the care of those remaining behind; promises to write—which would never be kept—were made; addresses of friends ashore in many ports washed by the Pacific were exchanged, and reluctantly, but facetiously, three score boys melted into small groups as they swung themselves over the side on to the wharf or into boats alongside.

Many have met for the first and last time in their lives, and in a brief few months they will be scattered over the face of the seven seas, some alas! under it. Amongst sailormen there is brotherhood without individualism, a true working socialism that cements together the seafarers of the world. One love, one friend, and one enemy—the sea and naught else matters.

One of the largest groups contained the *Myway's*

158 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

six boys. Here and there it melted down as a few boys passed on board various ships en route, but always the rousing return cheer roared out its defiance of the clanking of wagon buffers and the wagon tippers' maul.

"Phew! What a night!" said Poppy, as three a.m. was struck on a nearby ship's bell.

"And we turn to at five," echoed Ginger with a stupendous yawn, but none heard him for the other five were sound asleep in various stages of undress, and in seemingly impossible attitudes; for Toby's legs were affectionately wrapped round Price's neck. Thus it was that the watchman found them two hours later when he roused them with his, "Ho, there! Show-a-leg! Rise and shine!"

There was a nip in the morning air. The anchor lights of the ships around were not yet doused, and the Nobbies looked dark and colourless against the dawn's bank of light in the east.

In his hurry, the watchman had deposited a can of boiling hot coffee on Toby's sea-chest. Jock, in his sleep, reaching out for the clothes which were not there, touched the hot can and he jumped as high as he could; which was the bunk thirty inches above him. The bunk boards collapsed. So did Toby and Price. Thus three out of the six were now wide awake even if somewhat puzzled.

The next half-hour was hectic. Undressing had to be finished, shore clothes put away and workaday togs brought out again for perhaps a year. There was the inevitable smoke and the commencement of the last letter home which sometimes was the first as well.

One must not hurry over the bread, for this would be the last rootie for many months, if the cook's thrice a week one-pound paperweights be excluded. Besides, legs and arms ached with the cramp of uncovered and unusual postures.

All too soon came two bells and the Second Mate's forced snarl of "Turn to!" But the first beams of

the sun from its long Pacific journey peered over the Nobbies and magically soothed the tempers of men, as two ancient and wheezy tugs slide alongside with asthmatical coughs and chugs.

"Starboard watch brace up the yards!" bawled the Second Mate, whilst the Mate like a hen with her chickens led his watch on the fo'c'sle to make fast the tug.

"Whoo-wherep! Ho, bend her!"

But the Second Mate ignored the sarcasm in Murray's voice as the watch strained at the port fore brace. He slackened out another couple of feet, in disdain, yet even the dignity of nineteen summers can eventually be satisfied and, with the yards pointed, the crew took up their stations in readiness for leaving the coal wharf.

On the ships around there were signs of returning life, for it was nearly six o'clock. Groups of men could be seen on foredeck and fo'c'sle indulging in a last pipe before "turn to." The ferries were packed with workmen. Already the unnecessary moorings were aboard on the *Myway*.

With a very husky throat the Old Man yelled out "Slack away, for'ard!" Had it not been for the violent paroxysm of coughing and waving of arms the Mate would not have understood. In any case the Pilot waved to the tug, and with half her power coughing up the funnel and the remainder being expended in a blast on her whistle, she chugged towards midstream.

Ginger, with the light of love in his eyes, glared towards a certain housetop on the Stockton side of the harbour.

"If you saw her to-night you'd be cured, young fella-me-lad." So spake Dan Crellin, a wise old shell-back.

The response was sharp and sudden.

"Mind your own ruddy business!" And Dan did so because he was wise.

Lovesick hearts and thick heads soon felt the spell

of hard work, and less than half an hour afterwards the anchor was dropped near the entrance to the harbour, there to await the ship's departure papers and a couple of new hands. Moreover, there was much to be done to prepare the ship for the open sea.

Yet in a brief time there was a hint of the most beautiful of man's work in the loosening of tops'ls and to'gan'sls. True, they were wrinkled and creased, but God's good wind and a taut sheet would soon supply a remedy. There was a zest in the work; for a month is long enough ashore for any true sailorman, and the *Myway* had for two moons watched the reflected winks of the Nobbies lighthouse. There was a pride in the well turned bows and perky boom that elicited exclamations of delight from those who thronged Hunter's Quay. So perfectly balanced did she appear that one imagined she waited the words "Be off," and she would spring into life and poetical motion. Indeed, she curtsied gravely as a lumbering squat-nosed tramp—an early pioneer of his kind—rudely, so it seemed, shoved his way up harbour. His bow wave was broad-angled, heavy, and sullen, unlike the happy dancing waves of laughter that she would leave close alongside; for she and her bow wave were as one.

Yet lazily, she waited; the cable turning over in the hawse-pipe being the only sign of suppressed impatience.

On a cunningly arranged broom-handle her house flag hung at the main for all to see, and far up the harbour three other main-masts flew a similar flag. They had sent helpers from their crews for she was the commodore ship of the Company.

As the time of departure approached she, like the feminine thing she was, swung her bows away from the open sea while the crew manned the capstan bars.

Ginger sadly enjoyed the chantey. Deep in his heart he could sing,

*"Fare ye well, Australia's Daughters,
This must be our last good-bye."*

The seaman's chantey is true music, for it is the vocal interpretation of the emotions.

He brightened up as he sang :

*" And the wild waves cleft behind us,
Seem to murmur as they flow,
There are loving hearts that wait you,
In the land to which you go."*

In spite of the *Myway's* coquettishness, her faithful yet ugly and wheezy attendants showed her the way out even as the first puffs of the land breeze shook the topsail sheets. Tops'ls were sheeted home to rollicking music, and brace blocks rattled the song of the open sea. Handkerchiefs fluttered in the hands of lovely girls—for all females are beautiful a cable's length away.

Ginger saw *her* in five different places at once, and to make sure, he waved them all as did his shipmates. The boys from a score of pal-ships roared their parting cheers.

The tugs cast off in a hurry and jeopardized their chance of getting home again by prolonged blasts of their syrens.

"Hell or Valpo in twenty-five days," roared the Captain through a megaphone to the *Brenfield's* skipper on the bridge of the tug now rapidly dropping astern. Not for the first time had he promised a record passage.

"We'll show 'em, lass," he added, affectionately addressing his ship. "That's right, my girl," he continued as she proudly rose to meet the southerly swell. "Take a good sniff. Valparaiso's over there."

Ginger, from the main royal yard, gazed towards the Reserve Park and, as in the manner of sailormen when alone, he spoke his thoughts. "Two nights ago I was sitting on that very hillside with *her*."

And the sounds from the land were silenced as wind and wave commenced their long and varied

162 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

chorus of song, while the *Myway* headed sou'-sou'-east for the roaring forties and the trackless beat of the albatross.

"Cow! You dirty cow!" Russell spluttered the words as he shook the water out of his eyes, for the *Myway* had shipped a solid green sea over the lee rail, which had smothered the crew on deck. Yet not a man left the fore brace as the breast high, frothy cascade rolled into the lee scuppers.

Again each shiny back bent in unison when the Bos'n gave song. To a stranger all the oilskin-clad figures seemed alike yet there was much difference even in the sou'westers and in the manner of wearing them. For one thing the many shaped heads showed, in no uncertain manner, through the closely fitting crown. Some sou'westers were new whilst others were old and well worn. Shiny black and dull and all shades of yellow were there, long tails and short ones, even one of Manx nationality, though the owner was a Russian-Finn who had never heard of that delectable island.

A long row of mahogany-coloured muscled-faced men fronted the Bos'n. Thirty-two arms, as straight and as rigid as bars were stretched aft on the rope; for sailors pull with the legs and backs and weight, anything but the arms and hands which are used solely as a means of attaching themselves to the rope.

The attitude of the Bos'n was characteristic. He faced the long line of men before him, his right foot braced against the bulwark stanchion and his left half twined round the next stanchion, his left side resting hard against the to'gallant rail.

He alone, of all hands, was using the strength of his arms, more perhaps for a moral effect on the rest of the crew than for effort. Besides, he could feel how much was gained on each pull. Unconscious of the importance of his work, he would have been puzzled by a few obvious questions, but as like as not the retort blunt would have resulted.

What would happen if the tiny apprentice boy, known to his shipmates as "Toby," and who was entrusted with the end of the rope round small bollards, were to fail at taking in the slack which was so laboriously gained by the crew, or if he failed to catch a turn when the *Myway* pitched and rolled to windward?

The Bos'n's duty would be plain although not laid down in any text book. He'd clout the little devil round the ear. The Bos'n would not mention the possibility of hands and fingers being jammed in the brace block, or the possibility that the huge yards might take charge. No! He'd teach the little galoot a lesson. Supposing some of the men were washed away by a sea? A question like this might make the Bos'n cross. Washed away be sugared. How could they be washed away if they hold on to the brace?

And yet, two hundred tons of water in a foaming avalanche is no outsize in seas. Strangely enough the sailorman will chuckle if he keeps his neck dry, for, from there downwards he dresses himself in such a manner that is practically watertight.

Only a direct frontal hit, right in the face—and upwards—will cause him to use nautical language. But it sometimes happens that a solid green sea will roll aboard a couple of feet above the rail—and above the sailorman's head. Angry sailors pull well and the Bos'n will be quick in song. At sea it is "Growl ye may, but go ye must."

The growling mainly consists of a full and complete description of the ship and her family tree, together with vivid descriptions of the places to which she should be consigned.

Russell became mildly sarcastic. "Go on, gentle lady! Go on, sloppy Anne."

He paused to the "Hold all that!" of the Bos'n, and as she rolled to windward again, there was venom in his voice as he strained every muscle to the Bos'n's "*Whoo-eeer-HAI*"

"A spud in a soup pot!" he muttered. Then in a gentler tone, "Now take another one aboard. Didn't yer know I had the last one down me neck?" In a voice loud enough for his nearby mates to hear he went on, "It's your muffler she's after, Chippie," and the allusion to the carpenter's famous red neck-warmer provoked such amusement that half a foot was lost on the next "Hold all that." The Bos'n's profanity was profound, and he was only appeased by the thought that they would pull the yard-arm off altogether.

Then came the tiny comedy that led to tragedy. The chief steward emerged from the galley with both hands full of utensils—the officers' dinner. Ordinarily, an apprentice or two, nimble of foot, and clad appropriately, would have performed this duty, but they were occupied on the fore braces.

The Bos'n, catching sight of the steward, gave song again. "*Whoo-whaar-HUH!* And another for the Old Man's dinner. *Whoo-e-r-r-r-HAH!*"

With an increasingly good mood he went on again as the crew changed to the lower tops'l brace, "*Hoo o-e-r-r-r-r JAH!* Eleven days out and half-way there. *Hu-u-p Wa-a-y BAH!*"

Staccato indeed was his next command, as the *Myway* rolled viciously. "Hold all that! Catch a turn there!"

Then the mother and father of the seas came aboard with the steward, and his utensils tumbling over and over in the forefoot as it crashed across the deck.

As the streamers from a feminine headgear creation on a breeze, so were the sailormen holding to the rope. Time after time did the steward commit the unforgivable crime of the sea. He clutched at men's legs, arms and necks. Notwithstanding which, he was held several times while the tons of water poured over the rail, and through the sideports on each leeward roll of the ship. But the proverbial three rollers followed each other, and in triumphant ease, they rolled across

the *Myway*, sodden with the hundreds of tons of moving water on her deck.

With a sickening, lumbering, lazy roll, the *Myway* struggled hard while the steward, wildly grappling with two of the men, floated feet first two fathoms to leeward of the rail. The long line of heads and shoulders melted to five who, with the Bos'n, held firm; for they only stood between the fore yards and chaos.

Three hands were pinned twixt the edge of the deck-house deck and the bulwarks; all that remained of the weather side of the deck-house were jagged points of wood a fathom high.

The *Myway* became frisky as she shook herself free of the water, and the great fore yards clanked and creaked for joy, for her friskyness was their freedom. Braces parted and snapped; now a topping lift, here a sheet, there a halyard with a crack, click, snap, flop, and then the fore topmast stay went as the *Myway* tossed herself up the side of a forty feet roller.

The great clew-iron of the foresail clanged and clasked with fearsome monotony on bulwark and rail. Two sharp cracks as the fore to'gallant stay and the royal stay parted. Slowly, ever so slowly, the fore-topmast sloped backwards.

Manfully the Bos'n struggled against overwhelming odds, but he could do little with only one arm while now and then in a puzzled way he felt for the other one. And while he stood and cursed, the maze of rope and timber that was once the fore-topmast fell around him, but clear.

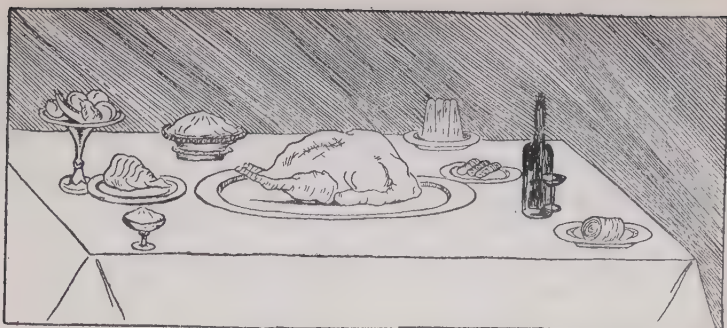
Fascinated, he gazed and stared at a point of the main-mast two fathoms above the deck that seemed to be as tissue paper, for the two-foot tube of steel an inch thick was bending slowly as a reed-grass in the hands of a child.

Deliberately the Bos'n turned as the great main-mast settled down to leeward, gathering momentum as it fell. Cascades of water poured upon him as he tried to clutch a stray rope with an arm he did not possess.

166 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

A grinding and grating of steel, a crunching of timber, whilst the *Myway* laughed in glee as the baffled seas broke on her bilge. . . .

“Re-insurance at the rate of seventy-five guineas per cent was effected on the barque *Myway* at Lloyds yesterday. She is long overdue, being two hundred and ten days out from Newcastle, N.S.W., to Valparaiso. The normal time is about forty days and therefore serious doubts are entertained for her safety.”



A SQUARE MEAL

OLD Bill Saunders was undoubtedly enjoying the packet of sandwiches I had brought him. Like the puff of smoke in the shrapnel burst had come his interruption of five minutes steady chewing.

"Did I ever tell you of the swell feast I had when McGinty came into a fortune?" he jerked out.

I shook my head vigorously, for the power of crumbs was unexpected.

"McGinty's aunt died and left him £138; least-ways, that's what was left of what *was* left," said Bill in an aggrieved tone. "Mind yer," he went on, "I suppose we *must* have lawyers. Anyways, McGinty said he was learning to write beautifully by the time he had signed the last paper.

"The lawyer fella was real nice; give us a fine cigar each and wanted to know if he could look after the money for us—well you know, sir, I mean for McGinty. But McGinty said he'd better 'ave it all, as we was going to have a feed that werry day.

"Owing to things going wrong at the lawyer's office we'd missed breakfast for nine mornings, so as to have a good appetite for the feed. At last the lawyer fella says, 'Here yar, sign here!' and McGinty did so. Then he handed McGinty another slip o' paper and he sez, 'Good morning, Mr. McGinty. Good morning,

168 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

Mr. Saunders. I wish yer the best o' luck wid yer new found fortune.'

"I will say he was very polite. He called some fellow named Blobbs to show us out, which was rather strange, as we'd been there 'bout a dozen times already.

"McGinty was fair excited like, for he was trying to put the slip o' paper on 'is 'ead and 'is 'at in his pocket. All of a sudden we both remembered the same thing. The lawyer hadn't given us the money. Good job for Blobbs the mat was thick.

" 'Gentlemen,' sez the lawyer bloke in a well-off sort o' voice, 'McGinty holds in his hand a cheque for £137 16s. 8d. Take it to the bank, me man,' sez 'e, in a voice just like an actor.

"The bank man looks at the cheque both sides and he seemed disappointed that it was filled in on one side only. 'Sign yer name on the back,' sez 'e.

" 'Narrabit of it!' sez McGinty. 'Last time I signed me name it cost me three and fourpence.'

"With that, McGinty hitches up his belt, but there was no more holes left and that settled it. He signed and we got the money."

"Then you had a good square meal," I remarked to Bill.

"Nope!" replied he, "No more swell feeds for *me*. Next time I want a square meal I goin' to Old Mother Bagshop in the Dock Road. Three rashers, two fried and four with butter. That's a good start for a meal. Isn't it, sir?"

I agreed vaguely.

"McGinty said he knew the hidemical place," continued Bill, "but a fussy old general wid rows of medals said we couldn't go in there. McGinty seemed to know 'im and pulled out some ten pound notes—but it was no use. He said we couldn't go in wid out a collar and tie, and that's all we had between us.

"Well you know, sir, money will buy anything, so we got fixed up in a nearby shop and went back again. Mind yer, good clothes do make a difference. Every-

body kept looking at me tie, which was a nice shiny blue. We was waiting on a low sofa for 'bout half an hour and nothing happened, so McGinty ups and asks a fella what about somethin' to eat, and 'e sez, the ruddy fool, 'e sez, ' Meals cannot be served in the foyer.'

" 'Where's the foire,' sez I, jumping up quick.

" 'Why, yer sitting in it,' sez 'e.

" 'When I came down again he pointed to some big doors. So we followed 'im to a table. At the same table was a woman who daren't move much, because the little straps that held up her dress had slipped down over her shoulders.

" 'What'll yer 'ave, sir?' sez a man in a big white shirt to me, confidential like.

I kicked McGinty under the table and the woman said 'Oh!' and got up quick.

" 'All right, mate, this is my treat,' sez McGinty to the fella with the shirt. 'What'll yer 'ave yerself?'

" 'Here is the *me and you*,' sez the fella, quite haughty-like, handing us a nice little book. So we had a look at it and couldn't find 'am and eggs nowhere.

" 'Alacartoe Tarbillidote?' sez Old White Shirt.

" 'Strufe!' sez McGinty. 'Them's passwords. This is some ruddy secret society.'

" 'Then I had a go meself.

" ' 'Am and eggs, cockleorum, chack-chuck, smuggh-smuggh. Chook-chook-chuck, chuck-chick!' I sez as nice as I could.

" 'Potty!' sez the fella, and away 'e goes.

" 'That's it, McGinty,' I sez, 'that's the counter-sign to them passwords.'

" McGinty said the fella was talking French same as the *me and you*. Then the fella came back with dozens of samples of pickles, vegetables and sardines.

" 'Haw derve?' sez 'e to me.

" 'Potty,' sez I.

" My word but he had a bad fit o' coughin'. When he'd finished 'e sez, 'Will you choose your next dish?'

" 'A bigger plate,' sez McGinty, 'and some more

170 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

plums.' Mind yer them plums was too bitter for my liking.

"White Shirt held out the *me and you* and I pointed half-way down the middle. Sez 'e, 'The band has just finished playing that.'

"'Is that a drink or a tune?' sez McGinty pointing to another place. 'That,' sez the shirt fella, 'is a to'gan's'l wheel!' That seemed like a shipmate, so we sez 'all right!' Blast me eyes if he didn't bring some brawn. Well, sir, we kept to the passwords and had some pickled cabbage, ice cream, soused herring, and honey. The fella with the shirt seemed a bit nicer after a while so McGinty slipped half a crown in 'is 'and and sez, 'Do you know a nice place to get a square meal?'

"'Yes,' sez this bloke, after another nasty 'acking cough. 'Wait outside for me and I'll see you right.'

"'Mind yer, no collars,' sez I.

"'Right char,' sez 'e.

"And that's 'ow we got a good meal, sir."



EVERLASTING GUESTS

FLANAGAN turned his back to the large circle chalked on the deck whilst Russell pointed to a space marked with a period of time between two of the many radii and said, "Whose is this?"

"Koenig," said Flanagan.

"And this?" Russell went on.

"Murray," replied Flanagan, and there was a vicious note in the tone of his voice, for Murray was Scotch.

"And this?"

"Yours." Whereat Russell groaned, for the watch was the last but one, and left but little time between his watch and the commencement of work.

The crew of the *Strathon* were arranging their periods of duty for anchor watch by a method in use when Drake himself sailed the seas. Ashore, just over a small pagoda, the sun had just set, whilst some ten miles away farther up the river was Shanghai.

Amongst the officers the Mate obligingly offered to keep first watch, which was the time occupied by the evening meal and a comfortable smoke. Truth to tell, the last quarter of an hour was occupied in undressing.

The Third Mate, as he climbed the bridge ladder, thought enviously of the day to come when he would do likewise with his junior officers.

The Pilot's voice in his ear startled him. "What

172 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

do you think of Shanghai? What you've seen of it, I mean?"

"Not much!" the Third Mate said in a decisively laconic manner. "Of course, in this country everything is topsy-turvy," he added. "The men wear skirts and the women trousers! They cry at a wedding and laugh at a funeral, and besides—Hey! Look there! What's that drifting down on us?"

"All right, young fellow," spoke the Pilot reassuringly. "If she bumps, let her bump."

Half-way down the ladder on his way to the Captain's cabin, the Third Mate paused, puzzled and undecided, for only a few months ago he was an apprentice with but little experience and no authority. His eyes were fixed on an object rapidly approaching on the port bow. It bobbed by, on the tide, a suffused glow of Chinese lanterns and a smell of freshly roasted pork and poultry.

By now he had his binoculars and was keenly examining the rapidly receding boat.

"Why don't they steer it properly?" the Third Mate gasped in an astonished voice.

"Can't. He's dead!" was the Pilot's curt reply. "It's a funeral boat and he has a goodly supply of food to see him over to the other side . . . wherever he's going."

The Pilot proceeded to fill his pipe as he leisurely told the Junior Officer all about the funeral boats, of how they are launched with much ceremony, perhaps hundreds of miles up a river from the sea, and are then set on their long voyage to the sea and beyond.

"By the way!" continued the Pilot, "did you notice those small mounds ashore before dark. They're all graves. A Chinaman buries his dead just where he fancies, and none may deny him."

"Take the case of my head boy, Ching Ah Loo, as good a butler as you'd wish for, but for some reason he would insist on burying his mother-in-law in the middle of the lawn in front of my house. He said he could look after her better there."

"I had visions of some further relatives being buried in the same place, so I sat and schemed and schemed.

"You must understand, I did not want to offend Ching—I didn't mind about the mother-in-law so much—and at the same time I realized that if there was to be a removal I'd have to do it myself.

"I settled on a plan and then waited for a suitable opportunity, which was not very long in coming.

"It was the night the *Fo Lung* went down and that five funnelled Russian cruiser dragged her anchors and went ashore, as big a blow as we've had for a decade, and Jehosaphat! it didn't forget to rain.

"But I was home for the night by a cosy fire with a favourite cigar, for that is the best way to enjoy the music of a typhoon.

"Ling Sat brought in my coffee and then it was I decided to undertake the removal, so I asked him to send Ching to me and come himself at the same time.

"When Ching arrived I told him to mix me a Mong Pa, a special concoction that he himself had found out, God knows where, and at the same time to show Ling Sat how to make it.

"A Chinaman is never astonished but I knew that Ling Sat would be taught nothing about the Mong Pa until Ching was told that his long expected month's leave had at last arrived.

"When they were out of the way I slipped on an oilskin coat, sou'wester and rubber boots, and taking a parcel from my smoking-cabinet, I slipped out on to the lawn. The french window opening on the lawn was on the lee side of the house, and I was soon by the grave. With my walking-stick I worked a hole about eighteen inches deep, and into this pushed a full stick of dynamite with a twenty minute fuse attached. To light the fuse with the cigar was a moment's work, and with my heel I firmly closed the hole."

"Anchor watch relieved fore and aft, sir!" The voice of the reliefs going off duty reminded the Third Mate that his pipe was out.

He took a stroll up and down the bridge with the Pilot for a few turns to ease his cramped limbs hardly daring to ask him to continue.

At last the Pilot broke the silence.

"Well! I was glad to get back to the chair," he said, puffing contentedly at his pipe and wriggling himself into a comfortable position behind the weather "dodger." In a low monotone he continued:

"Turning the coat inside out and placing both the boots and the sou'wester inside a locker, there was no trace of my nocturnal jaunt in the rain except perhaps that a good cigar was ruined. But somehow I was uneasy. Suppose the fuse failed to act, or suppose, worse still, it smouldered very slowly and acted after a long period. Supposing Ching decided to put fresh food on the grave. That would make me a murderer.

"Ching and his satellite seemed a long time. A terrific crash shook the house and made me jump a fathom in the air. My plan had failed. I rushed to the window with no fixed purpose in my mind, and then a vivid flash of lightning followed by another thunder clap revealed the grave absolutely intact. With a sigh of relief I returned to the chair.

"Would they never come? I never realized until then, what a long time twenty minutes was.

"In the act of ringing the bell, Ching entered.

"'Ling Sat, him ruddy fool. Me knock him silly.' This in a very self-satisfied manner, for Ching was a privileged person and like all senior servants of the East exercised his authority with a firmness rather than tact.

"There was a suggestion of astonishment on Ching's face, which also in a faint way suggested the exercise of some more 'authority' at a later and more convenient time, for Ling Sat—as was his right, he being the table 'boy'—had audaciously, and with a grin, taken the tray from Ching's hands and brought it across to me.

"Then I remembered the expected 'bang.'

Hurriedly getting rid of Ling Sat, I commenced a discussion of arrangements and details with Ching consequent to his holidays. Whilst he was expressing the wish that his mother-in-law was warm and comfortable, and that she would quickly go up to the Heaven of Flowers amongst her illustrious ancestors, there was a most unearthly explosion.

"Quickly lifting a piece of turf off my trousers, I stepped cautiously over the broken glass at the head of my staff of nine Chinese servants.

"A vivid flash of lightning showed a large hole in what was once a beautiful lawn.

"With the typhoon fiercely raging itself to a finish I went to bed leaving Ching in charge."

After a pause the Pilot went on, "At tiffin, or rather the absence of it, next day, Ching very proudly told me that his mother-in-law had been snatched up to heaven by the Gods and all my servants were celebrating it, which meant that they were feasting while I starved. Luckily, I was a member of several clubs, and in any case, I was always welcome on board the regular liners in the port."

The Pilot walked away suddenly. For a while he stood amidship, silent and immovable. He seemed worried, annoyed, angry all in turn.

The Third Mate forbore to intrude and took the opportunity of a look round, after which he silently fell to pacing up and down in a very circumscribed space, and out of the corner of his eye he watched the Pilot.

Of a sudden the Pilot burst into peals of laughter, loud and sustained, so much so that the Third Mate moderately expressed himself likewise, but always with his ear keenly alert for the slightest movement or sound in the Captain's cabin.

The Pilot made a funny gurgling noise and the Third Mate's hand was heavy and effective.

"Damn it all! They beat me fair and square,"

he spluttered, after retreating more than arm's length from the Third Mate's hand. "And I should ha' known what would have happened," he continued.

The youngster found it exasperating.

"Yes, but what did happen?" His tone was somewhat short.

"What happened!" shouted the Pilot at the top of his voice, and the "look-out" on the fo'c'sle replied:

"Nothing, sir!"

Both men ignored the uncalled for observation.

"What happened," continued the Pilot in a rising crescendo. "*Why, all my servants told their relatives, and now there's forty-seven graves on my lawn.*"



HOMeward BOUND

*We're homeward bound to London Town.
Good-bye! Fare thee well, Good-bye! Fare thee well!
With two thousand tons, we're laden down.
Hurrah! My boys, we're homeward bound.*

—Old Sea Chantey.

THE Mate was like a restless old broody hen. He had just been hanging himself over the half-round on the poop, endeavouring to read the ship's draft, whilst a twenty foot swell was rolling shoreward and tossing the ship about like a cork.

"I make it twenty-three feet four inches, mister."

The young Second Mate replied, "I make it about an inch less, sir."

Truly very diplomatic, also satisfactory, for the Mate was satisfied.

From the poop he hailed one of the lightermen alongside.

"How many more lighters, Lanchero?"

With gleaming white teeth and proud of his English, the young Chilian yelled, "One mor', Senor Piloto la ultima, carajo! Goo'-bye, Jonnygoddam. Sheep sail to-nigh'."

Goodness only knows why the Mate asked the

178 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

question, for he had been looking through the telescope for an hour past waiting for it.

Alongside, the ship's gig was just setting off ashore for the Captain, and in honour of the day they were clad in their best trousers and shirts, with their caps at quite a jaunty angle.

The Mate leant over the rail. "Cameron, tell the Captain there's only one lighter to come alongside."

As the Mate turned away, Cameron whispered over his shoulder, "Toby, hark at 'Gingerbread' letting out secrets."

Suddenly, one of the lightermen commenced cheering and yelling, "La ultima lancha!"

Sure enough, just leaving the jetty, was a lighter surmounted by a small Chilian flag and being towed behind a fussy little tug. The news passed down the after-hold resulted in further cheers. The boys in the ship's gig, now half-way ashore, exchanged vociferous greetings with the oncoming lighter.

In the bustle and excitement, the lanceros alongside in their hurry forgot their usual tricks of trying to steal a few fathoms of the lighter moorings. Soon the last of the cargo was alongside and the sacks of nitrate came on board, one at a time, in ever increasing speed.

The work proceeded apace, despite the fact that everyone seemed to be entertaining friends in cabin, half-deck, or fo'c'sle.

Now only one sack remained in the lighter. This one will not be hoisted in the usual way. All hands and the Cook, together with their friends, are stretching themselves in a line along the deck in preparation for the hoisting of it by hand. Meanwhile, an apprentice scrambled overside into the lighter; the Red Ensign and the Company's House Flag, attached to broomsticks, are passed to him, and he, proud of his honour, calmly sits astride the sack. In mingled curiosity, courtesy and envy, the surrounding ships' crews line the rails.

In a clear sonorous voice the Bos'n starts a chantey,

"Blow the winds up bullies, blow the man down.

(Chorus) Weigh! Heigh! Blow the man down.

Blow the winds up bullies, for London Town.

(Chorus) Give us some time to blow the man down."

As signals to pull, certain words in the chorus are stressed.

After the first few verses set by custom, the Bos'n tells in verse, witty, sarcastic, or cynical, the virtues, indiscretions, and failings of the crew, ship, owners, food and anything else that comes to mind, while the last sack mounts higher and higher, the "passenger," meanwhile, performing wonderful feats in endeavouring to wave two huge flags and hold on at the same time. Several singers follow each other, all of them, however, disdainfully ignoring the law of libel.

With the bag as high as it can go, three cheers are given for the ship, the singing recommences and the crew now "pay out" on the stressed word instead of hauling.

The hoisting of the last sack is never hurried, for what are a few minutes in a year or two. When it does reach the deck several rounds of hearty cheers are given.

"Splice the main brace!" is the next very welcome order, a bottle of rum for each "watch," one for the petty officers and boys, with one or more in addition for the visitors. After this, preparations are made for the morrow's hard work of lifting the heavy mooring anchors and chains.

A large coasting tramp steamer which arrived but a few hours ago, is now leaving again, while the *Brenfield* has been in port over three months. Even as the "tramp" heaves up her anchors by steam, half a dozen lighters cling round her like limpets, filling her vast interior with thirty-hundredweight portions. She will visit a score of ports in as many days, while the windjammers count themselves lucky to visit three in

a year. Yet they of the sailing ship know that the steamboat men envy them their pleasure in hoisting the last sack, of being homeward bound, for they are as the connoisseur who sips and lingers over the wine, whilst trampmen merely drink.

Nevertheless, in all their bustle they find time for the courtesy of dipping the ensign. So she passes with a hoarse voiced syren, her fifty derricks and masts in an ugly but intensely efficient criss-cross pattern.

But now for tea, for at eight o'clock voices will be needed at full strength.

Long before the boys have found the bones in the fishcake, the Second Mate bawls in the door, "Come on, you boys, the mail-boat's rounding the Point."

Hastily finishing the meal, preparations are made for a pull to the steamer, for owing to the barren condition of the surrounding country, all vegetables are obtained from the north-bound passenger steamers. By half-past seven the boat is alongside again, with many sacks of various kinds of vegetables and fruit, some paid for and some not.

By now, all hands are mustering on the fo'c'sle head. Hearing eight bells (eight o'clock) on the mail-boat, it is promptly repeated on the *Brenfield*, and now commences the second phase of "homeward bound."

Lying on the deck are four lanterns, two of which are white and the others red. They are attached to a rope stretching right up into the darkness towards the wonderful twinkling and winking stars overhead. When the last faint tone of the bell had died away, the Bos'n led off with a homeward bound chantey and slowly the lights rise up from the deck. First one of the red lights, then nine feet below the two white ones, kept apart by a nine foot stick, and the other red light a further nine feet below.

The music would be criticized by people with an artistic temperament, but no one would doubt the

sincerity of the singers, for it is in the motive wherein lies the merit of the songs.

The surrounding hills, from the dull beaming lights of the town at the bottom, to the stars resting on the ridges at the top, echo and re-echo to the deep-throated choruses.

With each succeeding verse the diamond-shaped constellation of lights rise inch by inch and many chanties are sung. "Rio Grande," probably the most beautiful of all the seaman's chanties, shares equal popularity with "California," although the former is a marching song and has to be freely adapted to the work in hand. Amongst others are "Whisky Johnnie," "Homeward Bound," "Ranzo," "Blow the Man Down," and the "Devil's Chariot." Some of the foreign sailors give versions in their own language.

But at length the lights come to a stop on reaching the fore-stay, at which the halyards are made fast.

A half-minute's vigorous ringing of the big for'ard bell resounds around the Bay, then Dan Crellin, a real old "salt," with a voice as big as his heart, bellows out, "Three cheers for the *Thetis*," which are duly given, and right heartily too, for she is one of the chum-ships.

She was not selected first for this reason, however, but because, as all the ships are moored in regular lines, she was the first in the landward line. The cheers are followed by a short but vigorous ring of the bell, which is sharply curtailed by an emphatic, "Silence everybody!"

Faintly over the water comes the ringing of a bell, and faintly too can be heard a voice following, for the *Thetis* is a long way off, but there is no doubt of the cheers. As the last one dies away, a short ring and a cheer are returned by way of acknowledgement.

Once again the long ring, and then, "Three cheers for the *Bass Rock*!" So the ships are taken, along one line, back the other, cheering Britisher, French-

182 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

man, Squarehead, and Dago, windjammer and tramp, liner and man-o'-war. Sometimes a Dago, not sure of himself, omits an answer, but his nearby neighbours shake him up with vociferous boos and catcalls. Sometimes, too, a ship is only manned by a few caretakers, but the ships on either side help in the reply.

With more than one muttered expression of thanks at not being in Valparaiso where there are three times as many ships, the last one is duly greeted and the lights are chanted down again, with a final round of cheers for the Captain, not exactly because he is popular, but it finally decides him to "splice the main brace." Everyone is soon in bed, for the last day in port starts at five a.m.

Eight bells in the middle watch (four a.m.) had been struck some twenty minutes ago. All that can be seen of the shipping in the darkness are the riding lights, with here and there the light through the open door of a galley (kitchen) where the ship's watchman peeled potatoes or perhaps dozed. The *Brenfield's* watchman, however, was quite alert, preparing the morning coffee, if it could be called preparation, for on some ships this only happens once a voyage, that is, on the first day. For ever afterwards, as long as the voyage lasts, a handful of coffee or burnt wheat, according to whether the company victuals its crew well or ill, is periodically added to the huge coffee boiler. Just as periodically it is necessary to extract a ladleful of grounds.

The watchman was in a "homeward bound" mood, for regardless of the steward's economical habits, he has taken out two ladlefuls of grounds and added three handfuls of coffee.

After filling a large "dixie" full of coffee, he proceeded to pull down a bundle of old clothes and blankets from the top of the coal-box in the corner. In the middle of the bundle was the Cook, and as the distance to the deck is over four feet, the method was

extremely effective, but, nevertheless, the watchman departs hurriedly. As he stepped out into the darkness a wonderful flow of language greeted the watchman. In fact, there were several, for the Norwegian steward, as yet but half awake, had placed his hand on the boiling hot "dixie." The watchman, more in a hurry than ever, yelled out over his shoulder, "It's just on one bell. I called yer three times . . . and don't forget, old cock, we're homeward bound!"

Mingled with the groans of the Cook and the language of the steward, was a long swelling crescendo of song.

"Weigh . . . heigh . . . heigh . . . heigh . . . show-a-leg. A—A—A—l—l . . . hands . . . all . . . hands. Come on you sons, you-know-what-sons-I-mean!"

So for thirty-three men commences the day of days with the dawn tinging the snowclad Andes in hues of olive and green.

The morning coffee is a thing apart from other similar repasts, for this is the last time that all hands will sit down together, and, truth to tell, the last five minutes before "turn to" is a time of sadness rather than rejoicing. With the exception of the "first voyagers," the crew are in an introspective mood. New resolutions are being made. The mistakes of last "pay-day" will not be repeated.

But dawn is breaking in real earnest, silhouette gives way to light and shade, and this again, with tropical swiftness, changes to coloured detail.

Dong! Dong! Five o'clock. Pipes are knocked out as the Mate in person bawls out, "Turn to," with a muttered hope that it is for the last time. As if by magic, an air of gaiety permeates the crew as they make their way aft to commence the heaviest day's work of the voyage.

Warps are run out to nearby ships and hove taut. The forward anchor cables are slackened out to their fullest extent, and as the ship drops astern, the after anchors and cables are hove slowly foot by foot with

184 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

tackle and capstan, after which the noon time meal is welcome.

Now comes the romantic part of being homeward bound, of that moment when the last anchor actually leaves the bed of the ocean and is "aweigh." The huge eighteen foot bars are shipped in the capstan on the fo'c'sle head. By means of a powerful spindle and bevelled gearing, this actuates the windlass underneath, over which the anchor cables pass on their way to the chain lockers below.

"Heave away!"

The Mate's voice is cheery though all that can be seen of him is the utility part of his trousers, for he is bending over the rail to see that all is clear. With a wild whoop of joy the crew race madly round the capstan, flinging off at a tangent, one or two men who were caught unawares. Meanwhile some of the elder hands drop out with an air of passive resistance and leave it to the youngsters.

"Save yer win' for a chantey, lads, it'll be two months before we raise the 'Lizard Lighthouse.'"

Big Dan Crellin's voice steadies them and with an appreciative, "That's right, my lads. Steady does it!" from the Mate, they settle down into a walk.

Outraging all canons of etiquette, a youthful apprentice commences a chantey. Notwithstanding the good-natured tolerance of the crew, he breaks down in the third verse, and although one of the cheekiest boys on the ship, hangs his head and blushes furiously, which is not improved by the Bos'n remarking:

"Come on, Dan, let's have a real chantey!"

Up to now the Mate was discreet, but at the first words of "Rio Grande," he took a place on a bar and joined heartily in the chorus.

For several hours the heaving round the capstan goes on, broken only by an interlude, during which one of the anchor cables was taken out of gear in the windlass, for it is essential that one can be completely hove up and catted, i.e., fastened to a stout but short bar which

juts out over the fo'c'sle head before the other is aweigh.

Towards the end the boys were sent aloft to loosen sails in readiness.

Before "weighing" the last anchors, all hands proceed to the setting of the more important sails, some of which are set against the wind to prevent the ship moving ahead. The warps to leeward being of little further use, are now hauled in.

With a couple of men taking their places at the steering wheel the Captain yells the welcome order.

"Weigh Bower Anchor!"

Much more effort is now needed, for the freshening afternoon breeze puts additional strain on the cable.

The crew heave with a will, although feeling the effect of the long day's work.

Encouragingly the Mate says:

"Raise that dead man's bones!"

"Wash the mud off his face!"

"Turn him over!"

"Ah!"

The men strain and grunt. They all know the meaning of the extra strain, for now approaches the moment of breaking out the anchor from its three months' old bed.

"Break yer hearts, bullies, but break him out."

The Mate is as good as his word, for the veins stand out on his peony coloured face and neck.

Suddenly the capstan flies round with a rush.

"The Bower Anchor's aweigh, sir!" bawls the Mate through the folds of a big bandana handkerchief.

Orders are rapped out in quick succession. The fore-yards are swung round to take the wind, and slowly, ever so slowly, the *Brenfield* moves ahead.

The main portion of the crew still race round the capstan while others tighten warps here or slacken them there, or assist in setting more sails, but the cable never stops rattling aboard.

186 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

Helpers are saying hurried "good-byes" and returning to their boats, towing alongside.

"Pera Ahoy! Let go!" exclaims the Captain through a huge megaphone.

"Aye, Aye!" is the reply.

The last warp is cast off, the *Brenfield* is under weigh, is moving without let or hindrance.

The crew are too busy to answer the cheers, but those in the boats towing alongside, deputize. The ensign is dipping repeatedly as she slowly draws clear of the line of ships. More sails are loosened and set, for the anchor is now at the surface.

Behind, the shipping becomes a forest of masts and spars, and as the distance increases, the haze of the seaport softens the outlines to delicate tracery. The Andes in their coldness rise out of the foothills with every yard's progression as the *Brenfield* proudly rises to meet the oncoming swell that will battle with her for months to come. There is a rousing cheer for the last boat casting off, for they are the special chums and because the crew may not see stick, nor stone, nor face for four months.

"Good-byes" are said, sandwiched between many facetious remarks, for though they sail the seven seas for a lifetime, they may never meet again. All too quickly their faces grow into vague white patches.

Behind, the seaport is a bluish smoky haze whilst beyond is the purplish tinge of the uplands and the cold hard serrated peaks of the Andes. Into the eyes of the setting sun, steer the *Brenfield* and her crew, loth to leave the Spanish Main, but happy in the knowledge that they're "Homeward Bound."



ON RESOLUTIONS AND THE NEXT VOYAGE

THE sailor has one feminine trait—just one; but how feminine it is. He thinks of his ship in a multitude of conflicting and contradictory moods, expressions, and affections.

One minute reviling her, the next moment sees him coaxing his ship in terms that no lover could exceed.

And, like a woman, too, he has a standard of comparison. Even as the young wife compares with her first love, even as the re-married widow measures by the standard of the "dear departed," so, too, does the seaman think affectionately of the last ship he sailed on, for, with her, he compares his present ship.

Many people who know much of the sea will swear that a ship itself has personality and moods. Be that as it may, there are many factors that contribute to a pleasant voyage or the absence of it. At the fountain-head are the shipowners. If they are mean or very economical the foundations of an "unhappy ship" are at once laid, for, in a variety of ways, this will thus be translated into misery and hardship. The food will be poor, and before all things sailors have healthy appetites.

Stores will be deficient. The officers will lose pride in their ship, thereby becoming disgruntled and tough in the liver. Accommodation will be cramped, without

188 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

which, it is impossible for the crew to enjoy their leisure hours.

Then again the crew consist, in the main of three departments—deck, engine-room, and catering. A suggestion of feeling between the “heads” is quickly felt through the whole of the departments, and in a twinkling there is created that bane of mariners, an unhappy ship.

Even one or two individuals out of harmony will upset a whole fo’c’sle, and sometimes a voyage will last three years.

Small wonder that the seaman divides his life into voyages and not years, and, as the voyage starts, so will it end—pleasant or otherwise.

Of course, especially in Scottish ships, or in crews mainly consisting of Scotsmen, a fuss is made of the New Year; and in all ships the centuries-old custom is ceremoniously carried out of ringing out the old and ringing in the New Year.

Curiously enough, on board ship is one of the very few places where this can be properly done.

Time is made known officially by ringing a bell every half-hour throughout the day. For convenience, the day is divided into four-hour portions, called watches. Thus in each watch there are eight half-hours. At the end of the first half-hour the bell is struck once, twice at the end of the second, and so on up to eight bells.

At midnight, being the end of a watch, eight bells are struck and, if it be the eve of the New Year, the bell will be vigorously rung for a minute or so, after which eight bells are struck again, indicating the beginning of the next watch—and of the New Year.

When next you hear a ship ringing out the Old Year you will be listening to an indication of time *which officially is dead*, neither in one year nor in another.

However, the advent of New Year brings no startling change of circumstance to the seaman. His shipmates are the same. The shipowners have not changed, and he still lives in the same room.

Seasonable greetings will be exchanged, but he looks forward to the end of the voyage, *for that is the sailor's New Year.*

Then it is that an entirely new environment will be entered, such a complete change of living as can be experienced in but few other walks of life.

It may be promotion, a change of climate, the length of the voyage, or even in the same ship.

Just as the landsman makes his New Year resolutions, so too, does the sailor make *his*, but in addition, with the greater chance of having them fulfilled. Yet he will remember his last ship's good points and forget the bad, for there is the doubtful pleasure of being welcomed home, and the longer he has been away, the less he likes it.

The sailorman after a long voyage in a windjammer is glad, exuberantly glad, to be home again, but——

Well, it's just the welcome that sends him back again, back to "Salt horse," "Liverpool pantiles," "Watch and watch," and all the other little pleasantries that make the "command of the sea" possible.

It doesn't wait until he gets home, oh no! It meets him miles and miles away at sea.

A ubiquitous tug-boat, one of several belonging to the same company, is looking for him.

Out of the darkness and mush of a sou'-west gale a hail floats down the wind.

"Ship ahoy! What ship is that?"

"The *Hardship*, of Liverpool," answers our unsuspecting homeward bounder.

"Aye! Aye! Pass a line for the tow. We've got your 'orders.'"

Like magic the news passes round the ship, and the watch below come up to lend a hand, for much has to be done.

The tug-boat Captain executes a feat of seamanship in passing aboard a long envelope, that does not pass unappreciated by his brethren of the deeper waters.

190 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

All hands shorten sail with gusto. The song of the sheaves in well looked after "blocks," although pleasant to the ear, is, after all, but the swan song of the voyage.

And then the "orders" leak out.

Leith and Hull——

A five days' tow.

The last three months' conversation among the crew consisted in speculating as to which dock they'd go to on arrival in Liverpool.

A four-years'-old Bradshaw was pored and pawed. The rival claims of Lime-street and the Central Station were argued. The exact time from ship's gangway to the first bite of ham and eggs was mathematically worked out by tram and overhead railway to a certain café.

And now—Leith and Hull. The tow rope came aboard with vicious jerks, and once again they were glad to be home.

Fog stretched the five days into nine, but it takes much more than that to eradicate two and a half years' expectations, and Wednesday night brings the loom of the lights close ahead.

The chances of another day's pay are eagerly discussed, for the total amounts have been worked out weeks ago.

The fo'c'sle and half-deck look like a shambles. Kitbags "full and by" and sea-chests are the only signs of neatness.

The man, who on crossing the line, swore he'd throw his "donkey's breakfast" overboard on the 10th January, has been sleeping on hard boards and old coats for these three weeks past.

But sailors don't care. The anchor is now at the cat head, and the Mate is standing by with a sledge-hammer.

At last, with a rattle and clatter that sounds startlingly loud in the silence of the anchorage, the anchor is let go.

Clouds of rust and dust arise, the dust from the ooze and mud of many a strange port in the seven seas.

The sea lawyers commence their argument that the voyage is finished; nevertheless, the Mate, by artifice and cunning, gets as much work done as possible before the crew leave the ship. The lights of the port wink tantalizingly as the men turn in for the last time to dream of the pleasures to come.

The sailor, newly home, has many friends, and with the dawn there arrive a large number of boats, each with something to give or a service to perform—at a price to be mentioned later.

The tailors, the butchers, the boarding-house keepers, with three nice daughters (they don't say whose), the men who'll cart all the luggage to the station, they are all there.

Papers and packets of cigarettes are offered, together with a business card.

The sailor's memory is short, and the sprats are accepted with avidity.

The time flies in hard work until the arrival of that moment of ecstasy—"paying off."

With hands and pockets full of money, the sailor wonders at the effusiveness of the many new friends he has found.

"Easy come, easy go," was never more paradoxical than in his case, for no one earns it harder than he does. And the sailor is naturally generous. Subconsciously he thinks, "you might be a sailor yourself some day."

The glance of a pair of ravishingly brown eyes, and a model ship that cost many an hour's sleep in the watches below changes hands.

A benign landlord, who is also a remarkably good listener—sailors love good listeners—receives a shark's jawbone that originally was destined to hang over a mother's doorway, with the word "Welcome" between many rows of triangular teeth.

The trains leave the station regularly, but all the

192 YARNS FROM A WINDJAMMER

good-byes are not yet said—nor yet is all the money spent.

From the shipping office to the railway station is perhaps three-quarters of a mile. The majority of the crew have only a mere two hundred yards to go, but at the present rate of progress it will take some six or seven hours.

Like a river flowing backwards, the crew split themselves in ever-increasing parties, but even as he works, so he plays—hard and with zest. In his company all are welcome, until at last, he comes to his home, the locality of his schoolmates, his family, parents, wife or sweetheart.

To the place that is associated with all the important days in the calendar, to that deadly series of conversations that even nullifies the laughing chatter of the children, of wife, home, everything.

Wherever he goes he meets it.

“Hello, when did you come home?”

“H’m. How long are you home for?”

“Ah! When are you going back?”

“Oh, well, I’ll be seeing you again before you go back?”

But he doesn’t.

The sailor takes good care to pack up before that happens. Like a woman, he would rather spend two years anticipating a welcome than enjoying it.

- 4 DEC 1957

1999

